MORE HOME TRUTHS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN

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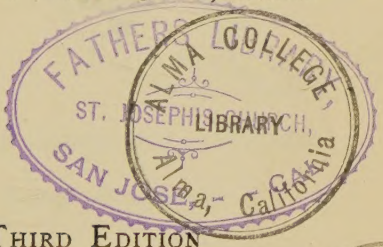
By MADAME CECILIA

Religious of St. Andrew's Convent, Streatham



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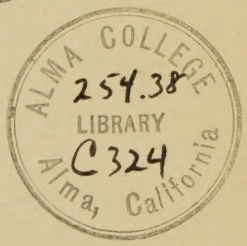

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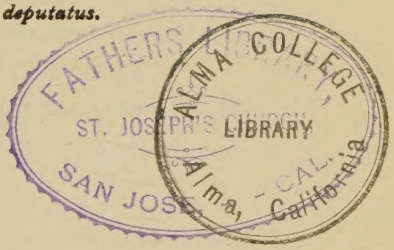

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Dedication.

TO ALL OUR DEAR LADY'S CHILDREN
AND ESPECIALLY TO THOSE CHILDREN OF MARY
AMONG WHOM IT HAS BEEN THE
WRITER'S JOY AND PRIVILEGE TO LABOUR FOR MANY YEARS
THESE SIMPLE HOME TRUTHS
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.

COVENTRY HALL, STREATHAM,
April, 1902.

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PART I.

THE CHILD OF MARY'S SOCIAL LIFE.

HUMAN RESPECT.

MOST of our Children of Mary are well acquainted with an ancient personage called Mrs. Grundy. It is not difficult to meet her, since she is ubiquitous; but it is sometimes very difficult to recognise her, as she has the gift of chameleonising at will. This privilege enables her to take various forms, and to frequent all classes of society. One would imagine there were thousands of Mrs. Grundys in existence, and yet, strange to say, there is only one. A powerful old dame is Mrs. Grundy. She saw the Pyramids of Egypt rise six thousand years ago, and watched the Egyptian slaves as they swarmed like bees around the compact masses of stone. In fact, it was chiefly to propitiate this old lady that they were built. Unfortunately, when the twelfth Egyptian dynasty died out, Mrs. Grundy was in the best of health, and so no sepulchral monument was needed for her; and, what is worse, she will live on till the end of time. She was born soon after the creation of Adam and Eve: this will give you an idea of her great age. Most of the inhabitants of the earth, savage or civilised, bow down before Mrs. Grundy and pay her tribute. Men fear the old lady, kings tremble before her; but few dare resist her will. Yet this stern old dame, strange to say, has a real respect

for those who defy her authority, and will even court their friendship; but very few have the courage to make the experiment. If she deigns to smile on an enterprise, it is a brilliant success; whereas her frown or sneer withers away a promising scheme or good work.

Do you know her, my child? Has she ever exercised her tyranny over you? Probably you have been under her yoke many a time, for she has a very special fascination over the young, who court her friendship often from fear rather than from love. Most certainly, at some time or other, you have made Mrs. Grundy's acquaintance. Her French name is "Qu'en dira-t-on?" Her influence is always baneful, and she has ruined millions. Perhaps you are curious to know how she acquired the name of Grundy, which does not sound very ancient. This is how it came about. About one hundred years ago the English dramatist, Thomas Morton, had a certain reputation as a writer of comedies. He brought out one which was a great success. It was entitled "Speed the Plough," and in that play one of the characters, a certain Dame Ashfield, continually repeats these words: "*What will Mrs. Grundy say?*" Hence we get the proverbial interrogation; and "What will Mrs. Grundy say?" is equivalent to asking "What will the world say?"

Mrs. Grundy embodies the *world's opinion*, which has exacted far more victims than Juggernaut on his triumphal car. Human respect is an immense power in the world. Civilisation has trampled out slavery, but it has not freed the slaves o

human respect. *As long as the world continues to exist* it will have its willing bondsmen.

It needs courage to break the massive chains which human respect winds around its victims: not that physical courage which faces danger and braves even death for fame; but that moral courage which enables a man to live up to his convictions, to hold up the flag of duty, and to be true to his colours in face of the world's scorn or enmity. There is a quaint adage, "Women fear mice, mice fear men, and men fear women," and so the cycle closes. Something like this so often happens in our daily lives. People stand in awe of one another, and in their terror sacrifice duty and sacred interests because they have not the courage to free themselves from this bondage. Why do even good people fear to go against the current of the world's opinion; or, in other words, why do so many Catholics tremble before the despotic Mrs. Grundy? Generally, because either interest, pride, or cowardice prompts them to court the favour of the old dame.

Suppose a Child of Mary wishes to get on in her profession, or to mount a grade in social life by making a good match. Then she may be exposed to deny her faith tacitly, rather than displease her employers or friends. She will run into the occasions of sin, and make sinful compromises, rather than blight her worldly prospects. She will indulge in extravagance and worldliness not so much from natural inclination, as from fear of being the object of ridicule to her companions, or from a desire to stand well with them. In a word, she will seek to

please the world, and will dread its frown more than she fears God. If our Heavenly Father does not mercifully interpose His aid, such a girl may continue in her downward career until she completely loses her faith, or at least ceases to be a practical Catholic, and perhaps even honour and reputation may alike be sacrificed. How many have been, by the desire of wealth or position, deluded into a marriage which has marred their whole lives. *Pride*, *interest*, and *cowardice* have led to human respect in the above examples.

Have you ever seen a chameleon? It is a beautiful little animal of the lizard species, and has the peculiarity of changing its colour according to the different conditions of light, climate, or *temper* in which it finds itself. If kept in a cool, dark place it assumes a white or greyish appearance; if placed in the light it takes different shades of brown, bottle-green, or blood-red. When provoked it instantly changes its tints. Does it not at once strike you that the chameleon acts in a very human way, or that man acts very much like this peculiar little animal (put it which way you please)? How often we meet people who change their opinions whenever they come in contact with one who differs from them. They take the colour of their interlocutor's sentiments, at least for a time. Place them in other company, and immediately they adopt other ideas. As regards changing colour when under the influence of temper, to this most of us have to plead guilty.

The victims of human respect dare not contradict, or put forward their real sentiments against

the least opposition. They will listen to and take part in a sinful conversation because they lack the courage to show that it displeases them. They can be laughed into sacrificing duty, betraying a confidence, or taking some foolish step. Weakness of will is at the root of this sinful compliance with the wishes of others. When a girl lacks the courage to say "No," she becomes a tool in the hands of her companions. They laugh at her weakness, and boast of their influence over her.

It is a terrible thing to fear man more than God. Jonas dreaded the incredulous sneers of the Ninivites, and disobeyed God in consequence. Pilate dared not wait for an answer to his question, "What is truth?" because he feared to offend the Jews, and thus to compromise his worldly interests; and it was human respect which made him deliver up Jesus to the Jews to be crucified. This vice leads people to break God's laws, to stifle the voice of conscience, to give scandal and to renounce their faith. These are some of the evils caused by human respect, and most of us, at some time or other, have yielded to it.

Do you feel, my child, that this fault is one of your great difficulties, and do you earnestly desire to conquer it? Then let us see how you are to begin, for the virtue of moral courage, like all others, can only be acquired by practice. It is neither a natural gift, such as sight, nor is it infused in our souls like faith, hope, and charity. If we would acquire any virtue we must feel our need of it, desire it earnestly, and be determined to exercise ourselves in that good habit. Now, past experi-

ence has shown you how much you need to conquer human respect, and you really mean to overcome this fault; but do not forget that the acquisition of moral courage is not the work of a day, for this virtue is far rarer than valour, and presupposes the existence of eminent virtues such as love of God, purity of intention, and fidelity to duty.

Begin by *prayer*. Beg of God to keep your feet from slipping, to uphold you in the critical moment of temptation. Ask our Blessed Mother to obtain for you something of that superhuman courage which enabled her to *stand* at the foot of the cross throughout the terrible agony of her Divine Son, and to brave the jeers and scoffs of the rabble. When you foresee that you will be exposed to a temptation, pray more earnestly. Let this be the special intention of your communions, and make some little acts of mortification for the same end, that your prayers may be more acceptable to God.

As there is a physical courage which has its source in fear, so there is a moral courage which arises from the fear of God. When we make the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius, we are told never to omit the meditation on hell, and the saint gives us his reason for this injunction. He would have us meditate on hell so that, if ever our love of God be too weak to keep us from committing a mortal sin, the fear of God at least may hold us back. As one nail drives out another, so the fear of man must be replaced by the fear of God. General Ziethen, one of the veterans of the Seven Years'

War, gives us a noble example of true moral courage. One day, having received an invitation to dine with Frederick the Great, he begged to be excused, saying, "Tell His Majesty that this is a day on which I am accustomed to receive Communion, and I do not wish to put myself in the way of any distraction."

Some days after, the king said to his favourite general: "Well, Ziethen, how did your Communion go off the other day?" at which all the courtiers laughed. But Ziethen rose, approached Frederick, and said gravely: "Your Majesty ought to know that I have dreaded no danger, and that I have fought courageously for you and the country. What I have done I am ready to do again when your Majesty commands me. But there is One above us mightier than you—than I, than all mankind. I will never allow any man to insult Him in my presence, even in jest; for in Him is my faith, my hope, my consolation." The king, much moved, held out his hand to the noble old general, and said: "Happy Ziethen! I respect your religion. Preserve it carefully, and rest assured that what has now taken place shall never again be repeated in my presence."

How often have we failed to be brave under less trying circumstances. To live in the presence of God, and to cultivate a holy fear of offending Him is a stout bulwark against human respect.

Our resolution to acquire moral courage should be energetic; we must *will* to conquer our natural cowardice, for "Will makes giants; it made Napoleon an emperor of kings; Bacon a fathomer

of nature; and the martyrs masters of death." Often it needs heroism to hold firm in spite of the world's sneer; but, if only we pray, He that is mighty to save will stand by us in the hour of peril and uphold our trembling steps. It needs more courage to live well than to die, for death is one supreme combat, while life is a series of battles in which we are often worsted; and, as Carlyle puts it: "The courage we desire and prize most is not the courage to *die decently*, but to *live manfully*." Many a man, for lack of courage to brave the world's opinion, has, in cowardly despair, rushed unbidden into the presence of the King of kings.

Take a firm resolution to do your best, to go on in spite of falls. Remember if you can keep up your courage in face of a defeat, half the evil is overcome. It may be a long and weary work, but each good intention and each act of fidelity helps you on. "Sow a thought and reap an act, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a virtue." Take care not to expose yourself to danger unnecessarily, for this is not courage but temerity. We shall always find sufficient opportunities of distinguishing ourselves in God's service without presumptuously running into temptation.

We must stand up for God and show that we are Catholics, unless Christian prudence forbids. Thus, it is sometimes allowed to *conceal* our faith —for example, in times of persecution; but we may never *deny* it. It is extremely hard to stem the tide of public opinion in certain cases. You are not likely to have to do this in great matters, but your home circle or your place of business

may provide an arena where you can gain victories over human respect. Whenever scandal would result from our silence, we are bound to stand up for God, not merely by interior adhesion, but also exteriorly.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, newly-appointed judges were required to take the oath of abjuration, and swear to have nothing to do with "the said James and the descendants of the said James"—meaning thereby the Old Pretender. Lord Campbell describes in his journal how Willes, J., when taking the oaths in the Court of Queen's Bench, abstained from repeating the formula after the official who was reading it, and had to be rebuked. "Brother Willes," said the Chief Justice (as he then was), "you should repeat these words after the officer of the Court, that we may know you abjure King James and his descendants." "My lord," replied Willes, J., "I am abjuring them in my mind." "That is not enough, Brother Willes," returned the Chief Justice; "the statute requires the words to be spoken." So his brother Willes obediently spoke the words, and all ended happily, as it will for us if only we have the generosity to abjure externally.

Besides standing up for God, we must also defend our neighbours when their reputation is at stake, or when we see them exposed to the occasions of sin, provided, of course, that it be in our power. We may learn a lesson from a brave sergeant of the 1st Battalion West Riding Regiment, who won the Victoria Cross for conspicuous bravery during the South African War in 1900.

During the action at Plewman's Farm, near Arundel, Cape Colony, on February 24th, 1900, Lance-Corporal Blackman, having been wounded and lying exposed to a hot fire at a range of from four to five hundred yards, Sergeant Firth picked him up and carried him to cover. Later in the day, when the enemy had advanced to within a short distance of the firing line, seeing a lieutenant dangerously wounded and in a most exposed position, Sergeant Firth carried him to shelter over the crest of the ridge, which was being held by the troops, and was himself shot through the nose and eye whilst so doing.

Often it happens that we hear our neighbour's reputation attacked; we know him to be falsely accused, yet have not the courage to risk a word in his defence, and make no attempt *to put him under cover*. Like cowards, we stand on one side, and justify our silence by saying interiorly: "I cannot make myself conspicuous; it is not my business." Is this acting up to the golden rule of charity, "Love thy neighbour as thyself"? Should we like our friends to treat us thus? Evidently not; then we must summon up courage to defend the absent even at the risk of entailing unpleasant consequences on ourselves. It is sometimes an obligation of justice to speak up for our neighbour, and not a mere gratuitous act of kindness, for we are accessory to the sin of another by silence as well as by active co-operation.

Jesus, our Master, reserves an eternal reward for those who have performed such golden deeds of charity—He counts them as rendered to Him per-

sonally. So, Child of Mary, when you hear your neighbour attacked, *put him under cover*, and Jesus, our Saviour, will stand surety for you before His heavenly Father, inasmuch as you performed acts of charity for His sake.

Lastly, *form definite opinions of your own*, and this will help you to stand firm ; it will give you something to defend. Many people agree with the first-comer simply because they have no settled convictions. In matters of faith, you have the teaching of the Church, our infallible guide. Study your religion thoroughly, and you will be thus prepared to hold your ground. Ignorance is frequently the cause of our cowardice, and to this we can apply a remedy. All Children of Mary cannot be students in the strict sense of the term, but all can know the Catechism of Christian Doctrine, which will furnish them with an answer to many arguments against Catholicity. Do not think it beneath your dignity to study your penny catechism, nor count that, because you learnt it at school, you are still proficient in it. You need not actually study the doctrines of the faith in the catechism itself, but at least hear sermons or read some instructive book on religion from time to time. Converts would do well, however, first to master the contents of the catechism before taking any more detailed instructive work. As regards subjects other than the faith, such as disputed points in history, the works of well-known authors, or other topics of the day, ask the opinion of someone on whose judgment you can rely, or read up the question in some good book. Always be

careful not to get out of your depths by discussing questions of which you know little or nothing. It is no disgrace not to know everything, and only a pedant thinks himself capable of discussing any subject that may be introduced.

Do not be alarmed at the difficulties that beset you in your endeavours to acquire moral courage; you must expect them, for you have undertaken a superhuman task. It is so hard to stand alone while those we love best are against us, and yet to know that we are in the path of duty, and that the finger of God is beckoning us on. Ruskin speaks beautifully on this apparent isolation: "If you will obey God, there will come a moment when the voice of man, with all its holiest natural authority, will be raised against you. The friend and the wise adviser, the brother and the sister, the father and the master—the entire voice of your prudent and keen-sighted acquaintance, the entire weight of the scornful stupidity of the vulgar world—for once they will be against you; all at once you will have to obey God rather than man. The human race, with all its wisdom and love, all its indignation and folly, on one side; God alone on the other. You have to choose."

You may actually be standing "at the parting of the ways." Perhaps you feel that God calls you to follow Him in the perfect life of virginity, and to consecrate yourself wholly to Him, while all you love best on earth, and your own heart as well, are against you. Hold on bravely, and with God's help you will triumph eventually. Many a convert has to face being cut off from all he holds

dear, and it is only at this price that he can save his soul. He must hold firm, brave human respect, and risk temporal advantages. Neither the fear nor love of creatures must keep him from obeying God.

These are great occasions that occur rarely, so let us be on the look out for the petty skirmishes which the daily battle of life so frequently offers. Here are a few examples of how we can practise moral courage and deal a blow at the vice of human respect.

Do not let yourself be laughed out of performing a duty. Never run into danger because you are dared to do it: this is a very cowardly act. Do not be ashamed to own that you are afraid to commit sin. Say your prayers openly, even when you share a room with those who do not pray. Abstain on Fridays and fast days in spite of a mocking laugh. Never apologise for your religion, or conceal it through shame. Never exceed your means in order to emulate your wealthier companions. Honestly admit your social position. If you are staying with Protestants, do not, on that account, neglect to go to Mass on Sunday. Never attend non-Catholic services. Do not help to propagate false beliefs by working for a bazaar in aid of a building for some non-Catholic place of worship or school. The common plea is, "I did not like to refuse": this is a cowardly excuse. It is your duty to decline, unless circumstances oblige you to comply; for example, if you are governess in a non-Catholic family, and part of your time has to be spent in needlework, or if one

of your parents insists on your contributing. In either of these cases you would have to yield. Never show your approval at any sarcasm or jest against Holy Scripture or Christian morality. Do not be ashamed of being pious, and beware of posing as a "jolly girl" just to conceal your deeper feelings.

These are a few of the occasions of standing up for God which we meet constantly. If we profit by them we shall strengthen our soul, and thus prepare ourselves for the greater battles of life when we have to choose between God and the world, and when our eternal salvation is at stake. In the crusade against Mrs. Grundy Mary's Children must be in the van, and not bring up the rear. God has a right to expect much of those who have received such abundant graces, and "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater."

ON TRIFLES.

HAVE you ever been on the broad ocean out of sight of land—for example, on the mighty waters of the beautiful Pacific? You gazed around and saw nothing but a vast expanse of water, and the ship seemed to be the centre of a great plain stretching out on every side as far as the eye could reach. Now a storm sets in, and the angry billows heave, the waves rise higher and higher, and the ship is tossed by them like a shuttlecock. What an overwhelming sense of power and grandeur there is in a storm at sea: and this majestic sight is the work of two elements, wind and water. Yet the ocean is composed of countless drops, and wind is air in motion. One single drop of water is so insignificant, and a molecule of air can neither be felt nor seen. Now, accumulate drop upon drop, and they become one of the greatest forces in nature. Add molecule to molecule of the invisible gases which compose our atmosphere, set them in rapid motion, and, sweeping over a mighty city, they bring havoc and destruction in their train. Wind and water are striking examples of minute particles which, by their number, develop into immense forces. Many other illustrations might be given: the mountain is composed of grains of sand, the avalanche of snow crystals, and the centuries of seconds.

So it is in human life; here and there a great name stands out on the page of history, but, generally speaking, attention to *details* helped to win fame for that man. Our great generals were all men who knew the importance of what the shallow-minded call insignificant trifles. They realised that "a straw shows which way the wind blows," and it was their attention to little things which made them such consummate masters of strategy. Wellington won the great battle of Assaye, which helped to break the power of the Mahratta chiefs, and laid the foundation of our Indian Empire. Many years after, when speaking of this victory, he attributed it to what he calls a simple exercise of common sense, which is but a paraphrase for what we have named attention to details. Here is the Duke's own account of the battle: "I was indebted for my success at Assaye to a very ordinary exercise of common sense. . . . I had to cross a river; my native guides assured me that the river was impassable where I thought of crossing it. I pushed forward till I could see with my glass one village on the right, or near bank of the river, and another village exactly opposite on the other bank; and I immediately said to myself that men would not have built two villages so close to one another, on opposite sides of a stream, without some habitual means of communication, either by boats or a ford—most probably by the latter. My guides still persisted that there were neither. I marched for the river, found a passage, crossed my army over, and had no more to fear from the enemy's cloud of cavalry. And there I

fought and won the battle—the bloodiest for the number that I ever saw; and this was all from the common sense of guessing that men did not build villages on opposite sides of a stream without some means of communication between them."

It was precisely this quickness in profiting by little details which pointed him out to the nation as the man who could successfully grapple with and defeat Napoleon; and England was not mistaken in her opinion—her choice was fully justified by subsequent events.

But all are not called to stand on the pinnacle of fame, and the majority of men and women pass their lives in the daily performance of commonplace duties. Little things make up the sum of one's home life, and it is not too much to say that our sanctification and salvation depend on how we accomplish these minor obligations, since Holy Writ tells us that we shall be judged by our works.

Each Child of Mary has her special path in life chosen for her by God. In that path are found all the means of sanctification which she needs, and opportunities of proving her fidelity to God.

Little things are important just because they are so numerous. Take one of your ordinary days. It is a chain of commonplace actions. You must rise early if you would not be the slave of a feather pillow. Then follows the duty of morning prayers. Perhaps our rule of life binds us to attend Mass daily, and it needs courage to turn out on a cold, dark, winter morning. True, the poor have to turn out much earlier to be at their work by six o'clock,

but this does not make it lighter or warmer for us. We return home to breakfast, which is followed by our ordinary occupations—work at home, studies, or perhaps we go out to business. In either case there is a dull, level routine, and most of the links of the chain are far from interesting or exciting. Thus many lives pass; now and then some circumstance may arise which calls forth greater energy and needs more strenuous efforts; but these occasions are rare. Most people spend their lives on a level plain where hills are rarely seen.

As we look back, we remember some trials which called for generous efforts. A loved parent was taken from us, and we had to exert ourselves to keep the home together. A severe illness overtook us, and it needed heroic efforts to bear up patiently. A heavy cross fell on our shoulders, and God alone knows what it cost us to carry it bravely. But these are exceptions; generally we walk on the level plain, and find there innumerable opportunities of doing little things for God. What do we understand by a little thing? It may be a word kept back, for words are little things quickly uttered; but what an immense power they are for good or evil:

> "Words are mighty, words are living:
> Serpents with their venomous stings,
> Or bright angels, crowding round us,
> With heaven's light upon their wings:
> Every word has its own spirit,
> True or false, that never dies;
> Every word man's lips have uttered
> Echoes in God's skies."

A glance is a little thing, but it may encourage a person to a noble deed or drive him to commit some deadly sin.

As we pass through our day we have constantly to check an unkind thought, to bear an unwelcome visit patiently, to conquer a repugnance, or to perform disagreeable duties which others shirk but which someone must do. We have to restrain ourselves from "chewing black cud"—that is, nursing our griefs or indulging in disheartening predictions. We must stifle feelings of jealousy, repress an affection which is excessive, or conquer our natural impetuosity.

It needs courage also to be faithful to our daily prayers, and to say them, even when we feel spiritually dry or dispirited. All these and many other occasions of conquering self may occur in a day, and what a harvest of merit we could gain if only we profited by these opportunities.

In a home how much depends upon each member of the household being faithful in the performance of little duties. If the cook is always late with the meals, what a constant source of annoyance it is, and how many sins it occasions. If a woman is always exercising her tongue in nagging at her husband, children, and servants, what a wretched home she will make. How much waste is entailed in the house by untidiness, yet it seems so easy to put things back in the right place. If this is neglected, objects are lost, temper follows suit and is lost also, and thus God is offended through neglect of trifles. Suppose that each Child of Mary took a generous resolution to pay

great attention to little things, especially to those trifles which the other members of the family neglect; so many homes would be thus transformed from an abode of strife to an earthly paradise.

We speak of little things, but it is no little merit to perform them faithfully, since we thus show great love. "For he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater" (St. Luke xvi.). These are the words of Jesus our Master. St. Paul takes up the same thought in another form when he says, "Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart as to the Lord, and not to men" (Col. iii.).

Little traits so often reveal character more effectively than great deeds. During the South African War a little boy of six and a-half years, living in England, when he heard that Lord Methuen was short of cavalry, with childish simplicity wrote and offered to lend him his box of toy soldiers (Hussars and Lancers). The general, amidst all the anxiety and turmoil of the smoking battle-fields of the Modder River, found time graciously to reply, thanking him for his offer, and advising him to keep his soldiers, as they might get killed or wounded if he sent them there.

How much this incident reveals, concerning both the child and the general. On the one hand, we see generosity; on the other, the thoughtfulness of a truly kind heart.

Are you tempted to complain of the monotony of your life—to forsake the beaten track in search of more stirring scenes? Take care and do nothing

rashly. The way of man is not in his own power, and he who deserts the path of duty is exposed to great dangers. Go on bravely, hold on day by day; your duties may appear menial and commonplace, but—

> "Do thy little well, and for thy comfort know
> Great men can do their greatest works
> No better than just so."—*Goethe.*

A spark is a little thing, but it is sufficient to fire a barrel of gunpowder; and so in the human soul, little faults neglected may lead to eternal ruin. Every act of fidelity to duty, however small it may be, merits for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. God is generous; He gives bountiful measure, pressed down and running over. In His eyes, how insignificant our so-called great deeds must appear. What God looks at is the good will with which each action is performed, and He values it accordingly. We are so weak and imperfect, so incapable of doing great things for God, that it should be an immense consolation to be able to prove our love by being faithful in that which is least, remembering that—

> "Little things on little wings
> Bear little souls to heaven."

How the world appreciates the importance of trifles when it is a question of temporal concerns. The rubbish which is put out in the streets to be taken away by dust-carts is a source of wealth. It is estimated that about two thousand pounds' worth of what is considered to be "rubbish" is thrown into the streets by the Parisians every day. This

means nearly seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds per annum for the rag-pickers; and, counting their wives and families, nearly one hundred thousand persons live very comfortably upon their share of it. In the gold mines, one of the most profitable means of extracting the precious metal is to crush the quartz and then separate the gold grains from the sand. Each grain is treasured because it is gold, and therefore has a certain value. Truly the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. How many golden grains we might find in the daily routine of an uneventful life. You are reading an interesting book when some one asks you to render some little service. Here is a chance of picking up a precious golden grain for the crown of immortality, so do what you are asked with a good grace. Someone in the house has a bad headache, and it is a little thing to shut the doors quietly; yet it shows a kind heart to think of the sufferings of others, and to strive to alleviate them. It is a little thing to write a letter to an absent member of the family, or to send a few flowers to an invalid, but both give pleasure. A penny is not a large sum, but the bread it will buy may save a person from starvation. Be on the look-out for these little opportunities of giving pleasure or doing good, so that it may be said of you:

> "She doeth little kindnesses,
> Which most leave undone, or despise;
> For nought that sets one heart at ease
> And giveth happiness or peace,
> Is low esteemed in her eyes."

There is a beautiful legend which tells us that one morning a poor old woman was told by an angel that our Lord would pay her a visit that very evening. She set to work to clean her house, and watched all day for His arrival; but He did not come. A wet night set in, and presently there was a knock at the door. Trembling with excitement, she opened it and saw a poor little boy, who begged for food and shelter. The house was spotlessly clean, and all was ready for the Master; how could she let in a dirty little beggar? So she contented herself by giving him a trifle, and telling him to seek shelter elsewhere. The beggar child turned reluctantly to go; suddenly he seemed to change, and stood before her bright and glorious, then vanished, and as he disappeared, she heard the voice of the angel saying: "As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me" (St. Matt. xxv.). How often does He, *in disguise*, ask us for some trivial service!

One great advantage of being faithful to little things is that this practice does not nourish the canker of self-love. There is less temptation to be proud of such trivial actions, and so we are more sure to receive the eternal reward. Often they pass unnoticed by our fellows, but God sees each one; and since not a sparrow falls to the ground without His knowledge, how can He fail to see those little actions done solely for His sake?

On the other hand, how dangerous it is to neglect little things. By so doing we gradually fall into greater faults, which grow upon us until

they become our masters. Are you tempted to despise little things—to think them beneath your consideration? Take care: you are on a dangerous path, for—

> "Our fates from unmomentous things
> May rise, like rivers, out of little things";

and to appreciate what seems little to the superficial observer, shows true elevation of mind. Perhaps, Child of Mary, you know you are tempted to neglect trifles, but you would fain correct yourself of this defect. How are you to set about it?

1. Begin by having a great esteem for the little duties of life, which, as we have pointed out, are so numerous, and also such a source of spiritual wealth. Piece in one by one those little deeds that make up the design of life's mosaic, and take care to cement them by charity.

2. Pray earnestly for grace to conquer the defects of thoughtlessness and impetuosity, which so often lead you to overlook little duties. Remember that—

> "Evil is wrought by want of thought
> As well as want of heart."

3. Be on the watch for every opportunity of showing your love to our Lord by conquering yourself.

4. Keep to your rule of life faithfully, unless charity compels you to deviate from it.

5. Be thorough in all you undertake; avoid being superficial in your work or studies.

6. Cultivate a habit of observation: so often golden opportunities slip by because we do not reflect.

These are a few simple rules which will help you to be careful about little things. "Look after the pence and the pounds will look after themselves" —so runs the old proverb; and it teaches us an important truth. Even our worldly concerns prosper when we are attentive as regards trifles. Many a disaster has been prevented by intelligent attention to details. Thus, Queen Alexandria, when she was Princess of Wales, prevented what might have been a serious accident. She is a very artistic photographer, and on one occasion took a snap-shot at a goods train which was passing over the railway bridge at Wolferton Station. When the negative was developed, she noticed that the bridge had a curve. She naturally supposed that she had not held her camera in the proper position, and a few days later photographed the bridge from the same spot while an express train was passing over it. The negative, when developed, showed the same leaning in the bridge. Her Royal Highness, not being able to understand this, drew the attention of the Prince of Wales to it, who at once guessed that there must be something dangerously wrong with the old bridge. Inquiries were set afoot, and it transpired that engine-drivers had been complaining of an alarming movement when they passed over this point. A thorough investigation of the structure being made, it was discovered that the defect had only been detected just in time to prevent a serious disaster. It was owing to this that the old Wolferton Bridge was rebuilt. It is a noble deed to prevent an accident and thus save human life, but all true Children of Mary have a

nobler motive than the mere pursuit of some temporal gain. They have for model, Jesus our Master, Who did all things well. He fulfilled every precept of the law, and He wills that His disciples should be perfect as their Father in Heaven is perfect. Mary, their Immaculate Mother, the ever-faithful Virgin, is also before their eyes, and by her prayers she will obtain for her children the grace "to gather up the fragments" of little daily duties, that nothing be lost for the next world.

GOOD WORKS.

"IN doing good, let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing. Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. vi. 9-10). In these words St. Paul exhorts us to devote ourselves to good works, and sets before us two motives for so doing—the certainty of a reward and the brevity of time. He also points out that those of our faith have a prior claim on our charity. All Christians are bound to do good works if they would obtain eternal happiness, for St. James warns us that, "As the body without the soul is dead, so also faith without works is dead"; and we know that the soul in which faith is dead cannot inherit eternal life. Clearly, then, good works are binding on all, and our dear Lady's children must not neglect them.

What do we understand by a good work? By a good work we mean any action performed to please God, and those deeds are only meritorious for heaven when the doer is in a state of grace. Those who are at enmity with God can and do perform certain good actions, such as giving alms or nursing the sick; but these, being merely the effect of natural virtue, merit only a natural reward. Sometimes, however, they become means of rising

to something higher, since the prayers of those who are thus befriended may obtain for their benefactors the grace of a sincere conversion.

There are good works which are of obligation, and others which are optional. For example, all must keep the commandments, whereas all are not called to follow the evangelical counsels.

Prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds are the three eminent good works, and they include all others; so we will consider each one briefly.

Prayer comprehends any form of communication with God, whether by supplication, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, or meditation. The study of the Scriptures and of Christian doctrine, or the performance of any spiritual work for the glory of God, also falls under this heading. Constantly we are reminded in the Bible and by the Church of the necessity of prayer: "Neglect not to pray," "Be instant in prayer," "Men ought always to pray," "Ask and it shall be given you"; these passages and many others shew us the importance of prayer. By it we are brought into communication with God, and we pay our debt of homage and adoration to our Creator. Prayer also satisfies and atones for sin, and merits for us an eternal reward. Therefore we must be in earnest as regards this sacred duty. We ought to pray daily, and all Children of Mary should try to get at least a quiet five minutes extra for spiritual reading. Our rule of life will prescribe exactly the time we propose to give to prayer, and as far as possible it will fix the *hour*.

Naturally, prayers of obligation, such as weekly

Mass and yearly Confession and Communion, must come first ; but if we are to persevere in well doing and advance in holiness, we must go beyond what is strictly necessary. It is essential for each earnest Christian to have some definite practices of piety laid down, and to be faithful to them, and a pious Child of Mary generally makes her resolutions on this point at the annual retreat. It is so self-evident to every Catholic that prayer is a good work necessary for salvation that we may pass on to the next eminent good work, which is *fasting*.

Here again we must take the word in its most comprehensive meaning. It includes by implication not only the observation of the laws of fasting and abstinence imposed by the Church, but also all acts of self-denial and mortification ; the patient acceptance of hard work, resignation to the trials that God sends, and the life-long struggle against our triple foes. In a word, all that crucifies the flesh or goes "against the grain" is a form of fasting, for there is a positive privation, either voluntary or involuntary, of some satisfaction or well-being. The Church brings before us the solemn duty of fasting during Lent and Advent, on certain vigils as well as on Ember days. These, all Catholics between the ages of 21 and 60 are bound to observe, unless they are dispensed from so doing by circumstances, such as ill-health or hard work, or have obtained a dispensation from their confessor for some good reason. The Friday abstinence is of obligation for all who are over seven years of age. As regards acts of self-denial and mortification, some are voluntary, others are imposed.

You cannot run away from a toothache, but you can refrain from purchasing some sweets or going to an entertainment, and thus make an act of self-denial. The trials of life fall on all, and no priest can dispense us from enduring them; the same holds good of the incessant warfare which every true Child of Mary is called to wage against the devil, the world, and the flesh. Whether we will or not, disagreeable duties present themselves; there is no means of shirking them, in spite of our good will to do so. If you earn your living by hard work, you have constant opportunities of practising acts of penance. Those who are in comfortable circumstances can procure luxuries which are denied to the poor. The wealthy can purchase immunity from many a burden which weighs down the labouring classes, but sickness and sorrow are not to be bought off.

Our Heavenly Father knows that trials are necessary, and each pang that pierces our flesh contributes, if rightly used, to our sanctification and salvation, and often brings into relief the best side of a man's character. Suppose, for one moment, that we had the power to ward off or to escape from the ills that flesh inherits, when should we do penance and satisfy God for our sins? How could we ever be made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ, "the firstborn among many brethren"? Few would have the courage to persevere in a life of voluntary suffering, and thus many would fail to save their souls. If you tried to climb up an ice hill with polished soles to your shoes, you would certainly fail to reach the top.

Friction lacks, hence you could not advance. If the surface were broken and uneven and you were rough-shod, then the ascent would be possible.

On the steep road to heaven our interior and exterior trials supply the rough surfaces, and thus we are enabled to advance. Now pause a moment and ask yourself if you are honestly obeying the laws of fasting and abstinence as far as it lies in your power? If you cannot do so, remember to *ask* for a dispensation; do not take it for granted. How do you meet the hourly vexations of life? Some people abuse them, and this is by no means a sanctifying process. It is wiser to grapple with contrarieties one by one and use them as stepping-stones homeward.

Some girls, with ill-regulated piety, prefer self-imposed sufferings to those which God sends. For example, they will observe some fast of devotion, and then the next day (or even the same day) will grumble or sulk because something is badly cooked. This is a sad error, for while the senses fast, pride thrives in the soul. During the penitential seasons, if we cannot observe them fully, we should impose some other privations on ourselves, choosing just those which really cost us something, and we should endeavour to be faithful to our resolutions. One of the most meritorious penances is the patient acceptance of sickness, with all its consequences of bodily pain, inaction, disagreeable remedies, loneliness and weariness. Another kind of penance consists in generously supporting interior trials such as temptations

or spiritual aridity. Positive acts are generally more difficult than negative ones.

The third eminent good work is almsgiving, and this covers a wide area. It comprises any work of charity, either spiritual or corporal, and every kind action done for the love of God. The seven corporal and the seven spiritual works of mercy are also included under almsgiving. Works of charity are strictly enjoined by Holy Writ. In the Old Testament we read: "I command thee to open thy hand to the poor and needy"; and the Gospel bids us even sell what we possess in order to give alms. This, of course, is not always to be taken literally, as many of the saints understood it, but we can keep to the spirit of the text and make certain sacrifices in order to relieve others. Almsgiving, in some shape, is incumbent on all, so let us examine the different ways in which we can help our neighbour. The seven corporal works of mercy tend to relieve the bodily wants, except the last, which enjoins us to bury the dead, and even this is an act of charity towards the living as well as a mark of respect to the departed. As Christians, we must be willing to share what we possess with our needy brethren, and God Himself stands surety for the repayment of what we bestow on them.

We read that a royal princess, Eugénie of Sweden, disposed of her diamonds in order to raise funds for a hospital. When visiting the institution, after its completion, a patient, with tearful eyes, thanked the princess for her generosity, and the tears of the sick woman fell on Princess Eugénie's hand. "Ah," she exclaimed, "now I

see my diamonds again." We too shall see our diamonds, or that which to us was as precious as costly gems, and which we sacrificed for God's poor. Even here we experience the happiness of having done a good action, and in heaven those diamonds will adorn our crown. The world can appreciate good works, and the pioneers of charity and devotedness rank among the world's heroes, as the following anecdote proves :—

At the close of the Crimean campaign, the English troops, victorious after long delay and much mismanagement, returned to their homes, and a large dinner was given in London to a number of the more prominent officers. The conversation turned naturally upon the heroes. At length, Lord Stratford suggested that it would be interesting to discuss who, in the opinion of such a company, was the person whose war career would longest be remembered in history. He asked each officer present to take a slip of paper, write the name of his choice, and then hand it back. This was done, and when the papers were unfolded, a strange thing was manifest—the vote was unanimous. Every man present had written the same name, and that *not of a soldier*—soldiers though they were, and loyal admirers of their most famous captains: each slip bore the two words "Florence Nightingale." It was a grand tribute and well deserved.

Many a conversion has been effected by deeds of love, where words have produced no effect, and this should encourage us to relieve the wants of the poor. Take your crucifix in your hand, contemplate

our Lord shedding His Precious Blood for you, and ask yourself how you can show your gratitude for His infinite love. You will hear the Master's gentle voice reminding you that the poor are always with you, and that you can discharge your debt by ministering to their wants.

When possible, avoid letting your good works be known, lest self-love step in and rob you of your merit; but at the same time do not refrain from performing a good action from fear of vain glory, for if we are told not to let our left hand know what our right hand doeth, we are also commanded to let our light shine *before men* that they may glorify *our Father*. We are not to seek the praise of men.

Unostentatious charity is very precious in God's eyes. Once, a wealthy American gentleman desired to help the poor at Christmastide. He went to a postmaster at Boston and told him that if any Christmas packages were sent to the poor with insufficient postage they were not to be returned; he would make up the deficiency. The postmaster did as he was requested, and this gentleman, after Christmas, received a bill for the amount of £20, which was promptly and cheerfully paid, and he continued this good work for many years.

All have not £20 to bestow on charity, but all can do some kind act which costs little and yet gives such great pleasure to the recipient.

A certain John Pounds, who died in Portsmouth during the last century, gives us a noble example of what a poor man did for the good of his neighbours. Here is an exact copy of the words inscribed on his tombstone;—

"Erected by friends as a memorial of their esteem and respect for John Pounds, who, while earning his living by mending shoes, gratuitously educated and in part clothed and fed some hundreds of poor children. He died suddenly on the 1st of January, 1839, aged 72 years." "Thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee."

This example proves that even the poorest can be prodigal of kind deeds, for they enrich instead of impoverishing the giver.

Here we anticipate an objection: "I am absolutely penniless, how can I help my neighbour?" You can render service by doing some kind deed which does not cost money. On Mondays, parties of working men are allowed to visit the whole of Westminster Abbey free of charge. On several occasions a lady had noticed a labourer carrying a cripple boy on his shoulder. She went to speak to them, thinking it was a father with his child. To her surprise she discovered that they were not related. The man was a kind-hearted neighbour, who carried the little cripple two or three times a week to see something of London, and the child was particularly fond of going to the Abbey. "The little chap likes to go about with me," the man explained, "and it makes him enjoy his victuals." This kind neighbour had solved the problem of doing good without spending money, and you, Child of Mary, will find plenty of opportunities of devoting yourself, if only you are in earnest about seeking them.

If the works of charity which relieve the body have such a value in God's sight, how much greater

are the spiritual works of mercy! Occasions of performing them are not lacking. There may be sinners in your own family who need converting. You will often meet non-Catholics who are anxious for instruction in our holy faith. There are many ignorant Catholics who need to be prepared for the reception of the Sacraments. Perhaps a friend who is in doubt how to act will ask you for advice, and, if you cannot give the required counsel, you can advise him to apply to a priest. The world is full of mourners who need comforting, and this we may do by sympathising with them and alleviating their sorrows when we can. The grace of kind listening is rare, yet it is a real act of charity to let the afflicted pour out their tale of woe, and the mere act of telling another is a relief to the sufferer. The aged especially need a sympathising listener.

The practice of the next two spiritual works of mercy often requires a high degree of virtue. It is against human nature to bear wrongs patiently, yet Jesus Christ has imposed this obligation on all who hope themselves to be forgiven. We are apt to forget that as Christians we are *bound* to support injustice patiently. This does not mean that we are never to assert our rights, but if, after having done so, we fail to obtain justice, then we must support the wrong without bearing any ill-will against our oppressors. We may feel anger and passion surging within, but, provided we disown these uncharitable thoughts, they do not offend God ; on the contrary, they help us to advance in holiness by the efforts we make to overcome them.

The fifth spiritual work of mercy is equally

difficult to practise. Though we daily recite the "Our Father," how few are ready to forgive an injury. We read in history that when Louis XII. of France was consecrated at Rheims, he had a list prepared of all his enemies, especially those who had been opposed to him when he was only Duke of Orleans. In going over the list, he marked with a red cross a certain number of names. Hearing this, the owners were much alarmed and endeavoured to escape from the court. On being informed of their fears, the king said: "I am surprised, my lords, at your flight. I never intended you any harm. The King of France has nothing to do with the quarrels of the Duke of Orleans. The red cross I made moves me only to clemency. I am bound to forgive the wrongs you have done me, as Christ on the cross asked pardon for those who crucified Him." In like way we should say, "It ill becomes the Christian to avenge the injuries done to a sinful creature."

The advantages of performing good works are numerous. They glorify God, help on our own salvation, and often are a means of saving others. But if we are to reap these precious benefits, we must count with the obstacles which have to be surmounted in the performance of works of zeal.

Here are a few telling words of President Roosevelt, which are well worth the consideration of our indolent Children of Mary, who find it so easy to let evils continue, without making any effort to remedy them: "When you see a wrong, instead of feeling shocked and hurt, and a desire to go home, and a wish that right prevailed—as

though you were an impotent Greek chorus, with pious wishes for all your politics!—you should go out and fight till that wrong is overcome." We notice that when a sodality is started generally all goes well. After a few months the novelty has worn off, then comes "the tug of war." Only those who have true zeal continue; half-hearted members drop off one by one. The director is changed, and his successor is not so popular, consequently the meetings dwindle down. Did these lukewarm members consecrate themselves to our dear Lady's service only while a certain priest remained at the head of the sodality? It looks like it. Suppose that *instead of grumbling* about what ought to be done you *do your part.* Attend regularly, try to recruit new members, encourage the sodalists to hold together and to keep up their former fervour. Remember that it is much easier to change your conduct than to make other people amend, so begin with yourself, working on "the lines of the least resistance," as the electricians say. God will bless your efforts, and a few generous, fervent Children of Mary, if only they put their shoulder to the wheel, can save a sodality from dying a natural death. This is fighting till the evil is overcome, and is far more profitable than lamenting over it.

Cowardice stifles many a work of charity. There are some people who cannot brave human respect; suppose we call them Mrs. Grundy's satellites. Here we may learn a useful lesson from non-Catholics. If you had been in the habit of going over London Bridge in the winter of 1901, you

might often have met a gentleman walking briskly along. He always wore a top hat, on the front of which, in large gold letters of about three inches in height, was written, "Prepare to meet thy God." One may question the prudence of such a means of doing good; possibly it provoked more jests and sneers than salutary thoughts, but at least the wearer of the hat had to run the gauntlet of being laughed at or annoyed. He was not ashamed of his colours, and we can certainly admire his moral courage. Few of you would like to be labelled E. d. M., nor is it desirable that you should be thus ticketed, but at least your deeds should prove that you are truly our dear Lady's children, and you can be marked by kindness, modesty, charity and zeal, which provoke no unpleasant comments. So be brave in helping in a forlorn cause; have the courage to show your colours. In conclusion, do not forget that St. Paul would have us *first* devote our energies to succour "those of the household of the faith." They have a special right to our alms, while others are not to be excluded.

As you finish this chapter, ask yourself, Child of Mary, what works of charity do I perform for my neighbour, and how do I accomplish them? Can I do anything more for Christ's poor? Remember our Lord's words, "I must work whilst it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." But before going abroad in search of work, let us look well around *at home*, lest we neglect commonplace acts of charity and kindness for exterior works, and thus incur our Saviour's reproach, "These things you ought to have done, and not leave those undone."

ON CORRESPONDENCE.

WHEN, in 1900, Baron von Kettler, the German Ambassador, was brutally murdered in China, William II. of Germany exacted a reparation; and, in 1901, a penitential embassy was sent by the Emperor of China to apologise for the outrage. The ambassador brought with him a letter of apology, which is an exquisite work of art. It is painted on a single piece of yellow silk, over four yards in length, and is beautifully illuminated with dragons, flowers, and arabesques, embroidered in gold thread and silk of various colours. The work is so perfectly executed that at first sight the embroidery is mistaken for enamel. The letter is enclosed in a yellow silk envelope, which is also elaborately embroidered, and fastened by ivory studs of the most ingenious character. This letter is carefully preserved by the German Emperor, both as a signal proof of the Chinese Emperor's submission, and also for its intrinsic worth. In Europe we do not expend so much art and money on a mere letter, but it is not uncommon to find letters written by Europeans that would almost equal this famous apology as regards length A letter four yards long! Have you never written one that would measure almost as long if it had

been written on one strip of paper instead of on separate sheets? Four sheets of foreign notepaper, if filled up, would about make up this length.

"Is there any harm, then," you ask, "in writing long letters?" All depends on what you put in them. In our days there are few people who do not write letters. Some are, by their position, forced to write a great many. Letter-writing takes up a certain part of our time, and sometimes forms part of our daily duty. Since this is so, it is well to legislate for our correspondence that it may be a means of sanctification and not an occasion of sin.

Various opinions exist on this subject. Some consider it an unmitigated nuisance; others write their letters philosophically: they get through them as a thing that has to be done. Others, again, find a real pleasure in writing letters; their ideas are numerous, and it seems to relieve the brain to put their thoughts on paper and communicate them to a friend. The same person may also regard letter-writing from each of these points of view according to the humour of the moment.

Ought we to write letters? Certainly; as a general rule, most of us have to write, at least occasionally. A child, when absent from home, ought to write to his parents; a wife to her husband, and *vice versa*. We owe letters of thanks to our benefactors, and courtesy binds us to acknowledge the receipt of letters, to answer an invitation, and to write at certain seasons, such as Christmas and New Year's Day, or to make nquiries about a sick person. There are letters

of condolence, which, though painful to read because they open up the wounds of the mourners, yet nevertheless give them real pleasure. It is painful to lose one of our dear ones, and not to receive a line of sympathy from so-called friends. Some people find it so hard to forgive when this mark of friendship is omitted, and if we are true friends we cannot be indifferent to each other's sorrows.

Sometimes it is an obligation to write letters of congratulation—as, for example, when a friend has escaped some danger, passed an examination, or inherited a fortune. As we shared in our friend's sorrows, so we should take part in his joys. There are letters of advice that fall to the lot of parents and superiors to write, and which are a great means of encouragement. They have also to fulfil the disagreeable duty of writing scolding letters, which are no pleasure either to the writer or the recipient; but if they are a salutary check, the end is attained.

What a multitude of business letters have to be written! Thousands of clerks and secretaries earn their bread by writing them. Last, and not least, there are the letters which pass between friends of both sexes, and these alone would keep a good number of post office officials employed, and generally weigh heavier than those previously mentioned.

We have taken it, then, for granted that our Children of Mary all have to write letters sometimes. Most people can read and write in our days, and all who read this chapter probably can

and do write letters; so it will not be useless to give a little advice about an occupation that takes up so much time, and which is such a great power for good or evil.

It has been said that "the style reveals the man." This is true to a certain extent; but, as Oliver Wendell Holmes says, "Every man is three men—John as he is known to himself, John as he is known to his friends, and John as he is known to his Maker." If John could know himself as perfectly as he is known to his Creator, and could, with exquisite art, put himself on paper, his friends would say: "That is fine art, but that is not John; how easily do men deceive themselves." As a rule, we do not depict ourselves thoroughly in our letters, either from ignorance or disinclination. Still, certain points concerning the writers must necessarily be portrayed in their letters. Take the mere technical art of letter-writing: you judge instantly when you read a letter whether or no the writer is educated. So often when employers advertise for hands, they lay down the rule, "applications to be made by letter only." Perhaps, reader, you have answered an advertisement in view of obtaining a situation, and were conscious of taking unusual pains with your answer, knowing that the advertiser would judge you by your reply. Or you may yourself have advertised, and judged of applicants in the same way. Not only when it is a question of getting a situation, but at all times, people judge us by our letters; so be careful as regards both form and matter. Think twice how and what you

write, since "*Littera scripta manet*" (the written letter remains).

Carefully avoid slovenliness. For an educated person, this includes blots, incorrect punctuation—or its total absence—proper use of capital letters. Correct spelling is easy for those who have the memory of the eye; some always find it a difficulty, and we must admit that our English language is extremely capricious in its orthography. Those who know two or more languages are apt to get confused as regards certain words that are very similar in a foreign tongue. The remedy is to consult a dictionary, and it is also a good practice to keep in your desk a list of those words about which you often hesitate.

Beware of excessive underlining. This device for drawing attention to some special word or fact should be used sparingly. It loses its point when the entire letter resembles the grand stave. Take care to write legibly, and do not cross your letter. So much time is frequently wasted in deciphering a letter, and often the receiver gets impatient, to say nothing of misunderstandings arising which sometimes cause delay and inconvenience in very important matters. Always use correct forms suitable to the person whom you address; these, of course, must be learnt. Teutonic words are preferable to those of foreign origin; the latter, however, come in useful as paraphrases to prevent wearing a word threadbare. There is, in our times, a steady reaction against the use of Romance words and Latinising, which were so common in the eighteenth century.

The writer's address should be put in the right place, and never or rarely omitted. You argue, "My friend knows where I live"; but the clerk at the dead letter office does not know your address; the letter may never reach your friend, and in that case you would probably prefer having it returned. It is an act of kindness to the post office sorters to put the stamp in the right place, as this saves time. Letters on which the stamp is not placed correctly are technically called "blind letters." Perhaps this is a sarcasm on the writers, who must surely be blind if, after having seen so many thousands of letters, they do not know where to put the stamp. The observation of these technical details as regards form in letter-writing reveals much of the writer's character. After inspecting certain letters, we could safely conclude that the writers were slovenly, careless, and perhaps impertinent; while others would reveal the good qualities of neatness, order, punctuality, and politeness.

Now comes the question of matter. What are we to put in our letters? Some girls sit staring at a sheet of paper with an expression as blank as the notepaper in front of them. They do not know what to say; meanwhile their right-hand neighbour is scribbling at express speed, and her thoughts flow so freely that the pen lags behind and only half expresses them. In England, of late years, epistolary style has been neglected. In olden times, before penny postage was introduced, people wrote more seldom, and it was for many quite an undertaking to write a letter. As we read

some of these old epistles with their quaint, antiquated preambles and forms, and their heavy, laboured style, we feel glad that we have not to pen such formidable documents. Now we are going to the other extreme. With some people familiarity tends to breed contempt of the simplest rules of composition. If it is worth while writing a letter, it is worth while putting something sensible in it. *Do not commit nonsense to paper* as a standing memorial against yourself. This does not exclude the light, chatty letter, full of the sparkle of wit or good humour ; but to pen pure nonsense is a waste of time, and if we ought to avoid idle words, certainly we should be still more careful about writing these words in black and white. If you are tempted, Children of Mary, to err on this side, write down the proverb cited above, "*Littera scripta manet*," and fasten it on the inner cover of your desk as a reminder to be careful of what you commit to paper.

Be careful, too, as regards the *number* of letters you write. Each Child of Mary must decide this matter for herself. Letter-writing must not encroach on the time which we owe to other more important duties, nor should we exceed our means, for stationery and stamps mount up in a year when we write much. Always find time for letters to your parents when you are away from home; this is, generally speaking, a duty, and you must write when the laws of etiquette exact it.

Many parents open letters sent to their children, and up to a certain age they have a perfect right to do so. As girls grow into their teens, generally

they open their letters themselves. If a Christian mother has trained her children well, she will wisely leave them this liberty. Girls like to say things to one another which they would not care to repeat to a third person. When a girl, who has received a good Christian education, has a real difficulty, she will go to her mother in all confidence; whereas a rigorous supervision as regards letters frequently gives rise to deception on the part of the children.

Suppose you are sitting at the breakfast table; the letters arrive and are distributed. Then, instead of instantly putting them away in silence, it would be at least sociable to let your mother know who has written to you, and to tell her any interesting news. Be very careful not to carry on a secret correspondence. Under certain exceptional circumstances, of which the confessor is the best judge, this may be permissible; but in general we must stigmatise it as a mean action, if not worse. So much evil has resulted from clandestine letters. What is good and honest need not take refuge in secrecy, so never degrade yourself by consenting to such a practice. *Such letters most certainly reveal the character of the writer.* Hysterical effusions of sentimental affection, and even untruths, frequently form the staple of clandestine letters. Have you ever read any specimens of this kind? If so, you must surely see how dangerous it is to cultivate this style, so do not adopt it yourself, nor *encourage* your friends in so doing, still less *help* them by your *silence*, *consent*, or *active co-operation*.

Never write a letter which you would be *ashamed* of a third person seeing. We may write to a friend about things which we should not *like* anyone else to read, because we naturally shrink from giving our confidence to the first comer, or because it treats of some private concerns. But this is quite different from writing a letter which, if it were read aloud by one whom we respect, would cover us with shame and confusion. Some silly girls make mysteries about letters which are purely indifferent. They may be seen apparently devouring the contents of a letter *when some companion is at hand.* Then the epistle is carefully put away, and hints are thrown out that the contents would greatly astonish the hearer if read aloud: that none could guess from whom the aforesaid letter came. If ever any girl acts thus in your presence, take no notice of her or her letter. She is only trying to make herself interesting. Some, in their anxiety to draw attention, will even go so far as to forge letters to themselves. To what lengths will hysterical folly go! Surely, all this is so utterly unworthy of a Child of Mary that we may pass it rapidly over. We have mentioned the subject as a warning, lest she should encourage her acquaintances by showing any interest in erratic productions of this description.

Frequently letters are scribbled off under the influence of pride, anger, or jealousy. On such occasions there is no blank expression on the writer's face. The words tread on each other's heels, and in the multitude of such words sin is not wanting. An epistle of this kind is generally

at least, two yards long. It is written and posted in haste; then our irate friend breathes freely, as a prelude to repenting at leisure. A few hours pass and she calms down; little by little what she has dashed off in her anger comes back to her. She would give anything to recall it, but it is too late. The letter reaches its destination, for few of these stinging missives miscarry, and the venom of anger, pride, or jealousy is injected into the soul of a friend—perhaps of a loving parent or relation. Take care, my child; never pen such a letter: wait till you are calm. Many a virulent letter would never have been written or posted if only the writer had "slept on it." It is no excuse when the writers say that they did not mean it. The unkind words have inflicted a wound which a hasty apology will not efface, and if it was sent to a mother or a dear friend, may be a source of regret for years to come. A young girl once wrote a letter in a temper to her mother. In it she had poured forth a volley of rebellious sentiments, and declared her determination not to be controlled. She posted the letter at eight in the evening, and, as her mother only lived about four miles off, it would reach her the next morning. About eleven o'clock the same night a messenger came to fetch the young girl: her mother was dying. She just reached home in time to receive a last blessing. When in the morning her own letter arrived, can you judge how ashamed she felt, and how sincerely she thanked God that her mother had been spared the pain of receiving it? Never did she forget this fault, and for months she fretted over it.

Let us be careful not to store up for ourselves a future source of regret. Charles Lamb once said: "What would I give to call my mother back to earth for one short day, to ask her pardon upon my knees for all those acts which gave her gentle spirit pain." Those who write undutiful letters to their parents may one day experience the same feeling.

There is another way of looking at such a letter. How would you like it to survive you? We value the letters of the dead; we esteem them as our greatest treasures. Even a man like Cardinal Manning could attach himself to a souvenir of his friends and to letters from "a vanished hand." When a simple priest, he was travelling in France with Aubrey de Vere. At Avignon a small black bag was stolen from him. All inquiries failed to recover it. He was extremely sad, and declared that whoever had it in his possession might keep whatever else it contained, which included £100 in money, if only the culprit restored the letters. At the first moment after the discovery of his loss, there was an intense expression of grief in his face and voice. He spoke little, and when his companion was about to offer his sympathetic regrets, he was stopped by these words: "Say nothing; I can just endure it when I keep perfectly silent."

Letters, the loss of which could have caused such pain, must have been very precious. *Some* of our letters are almost certain to outlive us, so be cautious in what frame of mind you write. If, on the one hand, we keep an old discoloured letter as a memento of our dead, on the other, we should carefully avoid keeping any letter which may com-

promise another. Burn at once a letter of this description; both prudence and charity counsel this course of action. So much mischief has arisen, so many scandals have been caused by people foolishly keeping letters which should have been burned. There are circumstances in which such letters should be kept, but these are rare.

Never forget that it is a breach of confidence to *show* a letter addressed to you to a third person, unless prudence obliges you to do so; or you are certain that the writer would have no objection to the letter being thus read. Indiscretion on this subject has led to innumerable quarrels and bitter enmities. Be careful lest thoughtlessly you cause great mischief. Another point on which people need warning is about reading letters not addressed to them. It is a mean, contemptible action to read a letter not intended for us. Some people are so dishonourable as even to keep and hold them in reserve as a weapon against the writer. If you pick up a letter, look at the *name* of the person to whom it is addressed, and return it to him or to the writer. Do not read the contents without necessity; and if by so doing you learn anything of importance, be careful to keep the secret, unless compelled by duty to reveal it. Anyone who reads letters not addressed to him, and gives them as the source of his information, is, as a rule, *not to be trusted.*

We have discussed at length what to avoid: let us conclude with a few words on the positive side of the question. Always write punctually all letters that are of obligation. As to letters to friends,

keep up a regular correspondence with one or a few, rather than have twenty or more indifferent correspondents. It is well always to read over our letters before sending them, to see if we have expressed exactly what we mean. A severe word *said* is often tempered with a kind look which the letter does not transmit, so the rebuke or unkind remark is conveyed in all its crudity. Never be the first to cease a correspondence that is a help to a friend, and do not be ready to take offence if your letters are not answered by return of post. Your correspondent may be ill, occupied, or absent from home.

In conclusion, be on the look-out for occasions of cheering up an invalid who is alone in the world. An old lady who had outlived nearly all her family, said, as she received the notice of the death of her only cousin, "I shall never have to write or receive another letter," and as she spoke the tears rolled down her cheek. It gives an intense sense of isolation to feel that no one in the wide world cares what becomes of us. There are thousands who are thus friendless, and, if our Children of Mary are watchful, they can gain many an indulgence by consoling the sorrowful with a few kind lines at Christmas, on a birthday, or on any other occasion. No one likes to be forgotten. It requires heroism to accept this cross. The Catholic Letter Guild is a great means of doing good in a humble way and at little expense. So many hours spent in futile employments might be profitably employed in writing to the sick and lonely who need a kind word of sympathy.

Thousands of souls have been consoled by the letters of St. Francis of Sales, both during his lifetime and after his death. We are not great saints, but we can at least try to do some good in the world. So often a letter received in time prevents a sleepless night and relieves anxiety. "No news is good news" is a proverb that has served as a pretext for many a selfish act that is unworthy of Mary's Children. Beware of quoting this saying to excuse your indolence.

Have you learnt something about letter-writing from this chapter? Then examine your conduct as regards correspondence, and see if you act wisely on such an important subject, and if there is room for amendment or need of curtailing. Begin at once; all these little sacrifices and duties fill up the measure of a life well pleasing in God's sight, and make us daily more like our Immaculate Mother.

ON THE USE OF MONEY.

PART I.

SOLOMON, in his book of Proverbs, gives us a model of a very wise prayer: "Give me neither beggary nor riches: give me only the necessaries of life. Lest perhaps being filled, I should be tempted to deny, and say: Who is the Lord? or, being compelled by poverty, I should steal and forswear the name of my God" (Prov. xxx.). St. Paul teaches us the same doctrine when he says: "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content. For they that will become rich fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils, which, some coveting, have erred from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, fly these things" (1 Tim. vi.). St. Paul therefore clearly lays down as a general rule that the safest road to pursue, as far as it depends on us, is to aim simply at having what is sufficient, at a modest competency, rather than at amassing a fortune.

Of course, this does not always lie in our power. Some people are very poor; all their efforts to better their condition are failures. Others, again, have no great ambition to be wealthy, yet

fortune smiles on them. In any case, we suppose, that to a certain extent, most Children of Mary possess a certain share of this world's goods, and have to handle money. Certainly, as they grow older they will have to manage for themselves and to look after their own interests. This is true alike of the heiress who anticipates enjoying a handsome revenue, and of the servant or factory girl who earns low wages. All Christians should learn to look on money and worldly possessions as a *trust* for which they must render an account to God.

Few people have sufficient moderation to be contented with the necessaries of life, as St. Paul advises. Riches in themselves are *neutral:* they may help us to gain heaven or drag us down to hell. It is true that money can be employed for a good end, and many people, when striving to become rich, purpose to assist their poorer brethren and to do good if fortune should smile on them. They become rich, but, as their expenses frequently increase in proportion, Christ's poor receive little of their wealth. Dives and Dorcas alike had this world's goods, but what a different use each made of them.

Poverty causes suffering, and hence is a means of sanctification if it be patiently endured for God; yet some are unable to support the privations of their lot, and have recourse to unlawful means of satisfying their needs. A moderate income contents few. It is so natural to desire more; and frequently, as our means increase, our desires keep pace with or outstrip them, and thus we are still

unsatisfied. A grasping spirit is a terrible defect which grows on us if we do not correct it when we are young. We always speak of "old misers," which shows that we are accustomed to associate the vice of avarice with old age.

Wealth may come to us from various sources. We may inherit it: then it is the fruit of our parents' or ancestors' labours, and we have but to accept and employ it well. Sometimes a man becomes rich by finding some treasure, or he makes some important discovery which brings him a great fortune. Others, and they are in the majority, have to earn their bread by daily toil in some shape or form, and there is something noble about earning the bread we eat. Now, whether you have inherited your wealth or have to earn your livelihood, you are equally bound to employ your means well; to use your money so that it may help and not hinder you on the road to heaven; so here are a few rules which may be useful to our Children of Mary concerning the employment of money.

Learn to *use* your money; do not take as your motto, "All for me." What good will it do you to hoard it up? Watch over and correct promptly any tendency to a grasping spirit.

As a ship, with miners from Klondike, was on its homeward journey, it struck on an iceberg and was about to founder. Instantly, the greatest excitement prevailed on board. At once a rush was made for the safes, containing some £75,000. When the miners came on deck with their loot, they found the boats and two rafts already

full. The gold they possessed cost them their lives. Some could have swum and clung to the wreckage when the ship went to the bottom had it not been for the gold which weighed them down. One miner offered 8,000 dollars, which was tied in his belt, to be allowed to cling to the raft; but to let him do so would have endangered those on it, and the poor fellow's fingers were struck off and he fell into the sea. What folly thus to sacrifice life for gold! Yet it is what thousands are doing daily, and the god of wealth exacts hecatombs of victims. Let us hope and pray that there may be none of our Lady's Children among the number. They have a nobler object for which to live.

You must learn, my child, to use your money as a "talent" entrusted to your keeping. You will have to give God an account of how you have employed it. You are not free to do what you please with it, to use it to satisfy your extravagance and vanity, or for any other sinful purpose.

Spend your money with discretion; do not throw it away on the first object that takes your fancy. Consider if the article in question is suitable, whether you need it, and if you can afford the outlay. When young girls receive their first quarter's allowance for dress, or their first month's salary, they often imagine they have a fortune at their disposal, and are tempted to rush off to purchase whatever pleases them. Take advice as to how to spend your small capital, and do not resent it as an unnecessary restraint if your parents or lawful guardians control your expenditure and insist on your not going out shopping alone.

Never buy an article simply because it is cheap. It will always be dear for you if it is a useless acquisition.

Goldsmith, in his "Vicar of Wakefield," gives us an amusing description of "Moses at the Fair." The worthy vicar sent his hopeful son Moses to dispose of a horse. All the family had a great idea of Moses' shrewdness, and his mother especially was firmly convinced that no one could drive a bargain better than her son. The boy therefore starts for the fair, riding the horse which he is to sell. Unfortunately, he falls into the hands of some rogues, and with the money which he received for the horse, was persuaded to purchase a gross of green spectacles with *gold* rims, according to the sharper's description. Moses, having fallen into the trap, arrives home in high glee with his twelve dozen pairs of green spectacles with real *copper* rims.

Some young ladies who, like Moses, have a high opinion of their business talents, are occasionally caught in a similar trap, and if they do not arrive home in high glee because they have purchased a gross of green spectacles, they have spent their money on an article that is equally worthless. So often you have laid out your small capital on articles which you have regretted buying; had you waited twenty-four hours, certainly you would not have purchased them; and this leads us to one very good rule for spending money—that is, *wait a day* if possible after you have decided what you will buy. By so doing, you will often be prevented from investing in some fo[illegible]ish or useless article.

Good merchandise is rarely to be had cheap, so be on your guard against bargains; though, it is true, there are some seasons of the year when certain goods can be had for less than the usual price, and it is prudent to profit by these occasions. It is a good habit not to carry much money about with you, lest you should be tempted to exceed your means. Also, when you set about buying clothing for any particular season, before going into the shop determine *not to exceed a certain sum*, and keep to your resolution in spite of the tempting wares, at a higher price, which take your fancy. This is a practical way of keeping well within your income. The neglect of this rule has ruined many a family, and the author of such a misfortune is oftener an extravagant wife than a spendthrift husband.

Keep your accounts so as to know what becomes of your money, whether your weekly wage be twelve to eighteen shillings on which you have to live, or a revenue of several hundreds or more a year. The larger your income, the more need you have to be careful as to how you spend it, since your means permit you to spend larger sums.

Beware of borrowing, for "the borrower is servant of him that lendeth." As long as you are in debt, you cannot feel at ease. Go without something rather than purchase it with your neighbour's money, and do not anticipate your next quarter's income. Do not be too free either in lending money. This does not mean that you are to close your heart and purse to one who is really in need, but be careful to whom you lend,

and do not be foolish enough to impoverish yourself by helping others to be extravagant. Be very careful about spending small sums; just because they are so trifling we do not think twice before spending our money yet these pence mount up and soon empty our purse. Thus girls take a halfpenny tram to spare themselves a five minutes' walk. If they do this twice a day, it represents a sum of two shillings and twopence a month; besides which they deprive themselves of necessary exercise and give way to laziness. In bad weather, however, it is an economy to ride in order to avoid spoiling our clothes.

"*Keep a stocking*"—that is, save a little if possible for a "rainy day." The amount you lay by will depend on your position in life and on the calls on your purse. Evidently, if you have to help an aged parent, this duty will probably prevent your saving, since you can barely make ends meet. In that case, give freely and trust the future to God. But suppose you have no one dependent upon you and that you are earning good wages, surely you can lay something by so that, should you be taken ill, you will not be a burden on your relations and friends. If a person has a fixed annuity it is less necessary to save; but even then it is well to have a few pounds put by for any emergency. In investing money, it is wiser not to put all our eggs in one basket, and to invest where the interest is *sure*, rather than where it is greater but less secure.

ON THE USE OF MONEY.

Part II.

"That last chapter was a very dry sermon on the use of money" was probably your exclamation, reader. Yes, perhaps it was; but you must learn these things, and some girls have no mother or friend to give them advice on this matter. If you have no need of these counsels, others require them, so take patience. Make a little act of mortification if needs be, and read this chapter through; it will do you no harm. Perhaps you find these "Home Truths" dry just because they condemn you, and already conscience has whispered more than once, "That is just where I fail"; or, "That is just what I ought to do." We may surely conclude that all Mary's Children are in earnest about regulating their lives that they may be for the service and glory of God, so let us see how they are to legislate as regards the use of money.

In our British Constitution, only the Lower House can bring in Bills touching supplies, for the Commons have "the power of the purse." The Lords either accept or reject the Bill, but they cannot introduce it. A Bill has passed when the Lords have accepted it and the Sovereign has

given his assent. Now, in the life of an earnest Christian it is the "upper house"—that is, *reason* —which must originate the money bills; while our senses—the inferior part of our nature—have to submit to the decision of reason. "Faith," like the sovereign, has to give a final assent, without which the bill is worthless. How often in the past that sovereign would have vetoed some of our bills if we had asked his consent.

Perhaps you remember reading in your English history how King Alfred used to measure time. He had large candles made, which were divided into three parts—one for sleep and meals, one for study and prayer, and one for the public affairs. Thus he was enabled to economise his time and get through a great deal of work. Try a similar plan as regards your income: divide it into three parts. Set apart, if you can, one tenth for God and your poorer neighbours: then see what you can reasonably spend on food, lodging, and dress. Leave a margin rather than exceed in laying out your money; and, lastly, do not forget to save a little. These rules apply chiefly to those who have to keep themselves and who are independent, for as long as children live under the parents' roof they have not the same responsibility.

Our dress must vary according to our position and means. What would be extravagance for one would be necessary for another. To a certain extent, we owe it to society and to the working population to live as befits our station, for this provides occupation for the poor. Still, if an earnest Child of Mary felt herself drawn to lead a

simple, frugal life, that she might be able to help God's poor and devote her time and wealth to them, this is undoubtedly a noble aim in itself; but she must not neglect those of her own family who have a prior claim on her devotedness, and it would be wise to ask a confessor's advice before taking such a decision. A girl who knows how to handle her needle can make her money go much farther than one who cannot do needlework, besides having the satisfaction of having a dress or hat trimmed exactly as she chooses. Provided you dress with good taste and avoid want of harmony in colour, you will always look ladylike.

It is not the girls who spend the most money on dress who are always the best dressed. All depends on how the money is laid out. Often a girl exceeds her means to purchase some unsuitable garment. When her friends see her wearing it, they instantly think, "What a fright So-and-so looks." And this opinion will probably be expressed among themselves in words as soon as they have an opportunity. It is really a pity to pay so dearly for such an unpleasant verdict. Probably few would have the courage to tell the girl herself that her dress is unbecoming, and perhaps if a friend ventured to suggest some modification, her frankness would be very unwelcome. Our foolish girl has spent her five guineas for a garment which makes her an object of ridicule to her friends and acquaintances. You have certainly met people who act thus, so be warned by their conduct.

One form of this want of taste is to dress in a manner that is unsuitable to our age. This is

more conspicuous with those who are advanced in years, and who continue to dress as though they were still in their teens. Always buy what is good, suitable, and becoming. Take the advice of someone on whose judgment you can rely. If you are deficient in taste, have sufficient humility to own it.

What a blessing it would be if some of the old sumptuary laws were reinforced. By them, at different times, restraints were put on people exceeding their means; certain expensive materials were restricted to the wealthy, and ornaments were not allowed to exceed a given value. These laws were also passed in France at different periods. Louis XIII. issued edicts about dress in the seventeenth century. On this occasion a comic artist drew a witty caricature; it represented the funeral of "Dame Mode." Drummers and cornet players headed the procession; then followed, two by two, a long file of knights and courtiers laden with bundles of finery, which they threw into an open grave as they passed it. The ladies came next, holding long rods on the top of which were placed various articles of feminine apparel such as feathers, flowers, fans, wigs, etc. All these were in turn to be cast into the open grave. The deceased "Dame Mode" herself was borne aloft on a bier, and the mourners, composed of merchants, needlewomen, hair-dressers, and various other workers, brought up the rear. Our artist might have dug another grave in which the diseases engendered by foolish fashions might have been buried for good. But our Children of Mary will do this individually in

order to keep their health and use this precious gift of God for His glory.

Besides what we expend on dress, we all require holidays and certain amusements, which must also be regulated by the depth of our purse, therefore, a sum should be set apart for them.

Whatever be our condition, we can find means of doing some good to those poorer than ourselves. Often we can help in kind if not in money, or we can at least render a service to one who needs it. If we are fairly well off, it is a good plan to purchase material and to work for the poor; or we can adapt for their use a garment which is no longer required. Sometimes parcels of old clothes are sent to charities, and it is a very common complaint of those who are charged to receive these gifts that so often the clothes are useless because they are moth-eaten. Given in time, they would have been most useful; as it is, the parcel, or at least some of the articles, have to be burnt. Give your cast-off clothing to Christ's poor, and forestall the moths. In so doing, however, take care not to give unsuitable things, for it is no service to give the poor shabby finery that ill befits their condition. A little devotedness in turning or altering a garment will double its value without any extra outlay of money.

The jumble sales in the poor districts are an outlet for this kind of charity. If you do not know of any worthy recipients, there are always plenty of charitable institutions where cast-off clothing is gratefully accepted. If you *buy* material to make clothes for the poor, let it be good, for

they cannot afford to renew their outfit often, and it is kinder to give them good materials, even if you give fewer articles in consequence. If you have no time to work for the poor, be careful to put something in the poor-box, for almsgiving is a precept. Let there be no condescension in your way of giving alms.

A pretty story is told of a little boy who once found a picture of a saint, which he showed to his sister, saying: "I have found a portrait of Jesus; look at the gold ring round His head." "No," replied his sister, "this is not Jesus. See, there is the name of a saint, but it is so long, I cannot read it." "Well," replied the little fellow, "if it is not Jesus, it is one of His relations."

It is just in this spirit that we should minister to Christ's poor. They are truly "His relations," and He will count as done to Him all we do for them. They have a *right* to our alms. A certain lady of rank used to say that the chief use of a carriage was to carry food and clothes to the poor. All have not such noble sentiments, but at least our Children of Mary should try to bring home to themselves the fact, that they are not to selfishly take all God gives of wealth and comfort, without sharing them with the needy.

Last, but by no means least, God must have His share of our income. It is a duty to contribute to the support of our religion and to maintain our priests. We have not a State-paid Church—all expenses have to be met by voluntary contributions. Hence, we have collections at most of the services. We must decide what it is our duty to

give, and if we are in doubt we should consult our confessor on the subject. Most certainly we are not to content ourselves by giving God just what we do not miss—a paltry dole such as we might bestow on a beggar in the street. Our Heavenly Father has a right to expect more than that. The Jews were commanded to set aside the tenth of their income to God, and it would be a good practice if all Christians could follow the same rule. This, however, is not always possible; but at least, each Child of Mary must give conscientiously, according to her means.

If we judge of people's income by the alms that are collected, we should imagine whole congregations to be on the verge of starvation. A parish priest once shrewdly remarked: "When I look at a well-dressed congregation, I say to myself, 'Where are the poor?' When I count the offerings, I ask, 'Where are the rich?'"

These few simple rules about the use of money will, it is hoped, be useful to many. It is a great thing to use aright the gifts of God, and there is a heavy responsibility weighing on those who possess this world's goods. Let us try to have a clear conscience at the hour of death, and be ready to part with our wealth *before*, if God sees fit to deprive us of it. There is no sin in having lawful riches, but there is great danger in getting attached to them. To prevent this, you must be willing to share these gifts of God with your needy brethren and to contribute to the support of religion. Remember the dead; let them also have a share in your alms. Have a Mass said for your deceased

relations, especially for your parents. Thus you are procuring to yourself intercessors for the day when you will have to stand before God to give an account of your stewardship. God grant us all to hear the welcome invitation, "Come, ye blessed of My Father."

SWIFT TO HEAR.

It has been truly said that we only really appreciate the gifts of God when we lose them. Until then, we take them as a matter of course: we have always enjoyed them, and they seem indispensable to our happiness. Take wealth, for example: a person accustomed to all the luxuries of life, and who has always lived in opulence, cannot realise the value of money. So it is with health and the use of our senses. What a precious thing eyesight is, yet we rarely give it a thought; often we abuse it, and thus lessen or deprive ourselves of this inestimable gift. The same truth applies to the sense of hearing. What an endless series of petty privations a deaf person has to endure. An interesting or amusing story is related, and the deaf man sits there ignorant of what is being said. He can neither share the keen interest nor the laughter of the listeners. Often the partial deprivation of this sense, or its entire loss, is the ruin of a man's worldly prospects. He can no longer carry on his business. Now, among the deaf in this world there are "those who won't hear," as the proverb tells us; and this is a very bad form of deafness, for St. James says: "Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak and slow to anger."

Once a little boy was playing with his tin soldiers, when the nurse came into the room and told him that he must put them away, as it was time to go to bed. Like most children, he preferred play to bed, so he pretended not to hear. The nurse, without repeating the order, said quietly: "Johnny, did you not hear what I told you?" "No," said Johnny; "I did not hear you tell me *to go to bed.*" With childlike candour he thereby betrayed the fact that he was one of those who would not hear. As we grow older, we lose the simplicity of our childhood, and are more careful to conceal when our deafness is produced by the will. When we do not want to hear, we do not let people have the chance of giving us an unpleasant order; we avoid asking a permission which we think will be refused, and refrain from consulting our superiors. Have you never acted thus in your life? Probably, at some time or other of our lives, we have all been subject to this infirmity.

"Let every man be swift to hear" is the apostolic precept. Let us examine the subject more thoroughly, and see when we should be swift to hear. There is a still, small voice which speaks within: we call it conscience, and it points out the path of duty. To what dangers we expose ourselves when we stop our ears to the biddings of this interior monitor. Yes, every Christian should be "swift to hear" the voice of duty. Some duties are agreeable, and just because we like performing them we listen to the call. You like arranging flowers for the drawing-room; you love your morning bicycle ride; you are fond of study, and rarely

you neglect these things. On the other hand, you hate mending your clothes, keeping your room in order, or entertaining visitors; and, consequently, you sometimes try to shirk these disagreeable duties. Or, again, you may have to earn your living; and here you find the same principle—a tendency to neglect or to perform carelessly an occupation which you dislike, and to spend too much time on those which are more congenial to your tastes.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that when St. Paul was at Troas, a vision was shown to him in the night. He saw "a man of Macedonia standing and beseeching him, and saying: Pass over into Macedonia and help us. And as soon as he had seen the vision, immediately he sought to go into Macedonia." Notice there was no delay on the apostle's part; he was swift to hear the voice that appealed for help. So often in the daily round we, too, hear a cry for help. We are members of a great family, and none of us can stand alone; we all need at times a helping hand. If the love of God is burning brightly in our hearts, we shall be swift to hear the cry of distress, no matter whence it comes. It may be an appeal for some little service which we can render to an invalid or aged person. Or our neighbour is pressed for time, and we can lend a helping hand. The poor appeal to our charity, and we can assist them by giving our time or money.

Are you swift to hear when the still, small voice reminds you of your duty to your parents? Even the world is severe in judgments on those who fail

in respect towards their parents. Such conduct disedifies our neighbours.

Kind words cost nothing but a little effort, yet so often they are at a premium. Be on the look-out, Child of Mary, and you will find ample opportunities of hearing the cry for help ; and, like St. Paul, always answer it promptly, for he who gives quickly gives twice.

Are you in a position of confidence, having others under your authority? Then be swift to hear *both sides* of a story. Do not act impulsively and condemn a person unheard. There are two sides to every question, and those in authority, if they would act justly, have to balance well the *pros* and *cons*, since a judge must be unbiased. How many times in our lives we have been mistaken in the opinion we have formed of a person. We had been too swift to hear an evil report, and thus erred against charity.

Be swift to hear the inspirations of the Holy Ghost: this is what St. Paul calls "being led by the Spirit." We are His temples, for He dwells in the soul of the Christian that is in grace with God. Often our Divine Guest speaks to us interiorly, and bids us avoid some fault or practise some virtue. Just as a good barometer is highly sensitive, and shows a marked rise or fall of the mercury for a slight change of the atmospheric pressure, so the earnest Catholic perceives instantly the prompting of the Holy Ghost, and for a generous soul to hear and obey are one and the same thing.

All this is not easy to put into practice. We need generosity, self-control, charity, and a delicate

conscience if we are always to be swift to hear the voice of duty, an appeal for help, both sides of a story, or the voice of God. But with the help of God's grace we can gradually acquire the good habit of hearing quickly. There is what we may call "a short cut" for arriving rapidly at this degree of virtue, which consists in living for others.

French psychologists have lately been discussing the paradox which Diderot laid down in the following words: "Absolute insensibility is the quality of the highest acting." French players have been asked to give their opinions on the subject, and the result has been that the truth of Diderot's statement has been denied. All the eminent actors agree that they only act well when they feel their parts, and, best of all, when they feel so strongly as to forget themselves. The same holds good in the spiritual life: we shall best act our part in life's drama when we live above self. If we examine the subject thoroughly, we shall find that a certain egotism is at the root of our assumed deafness.

Besides being swift to hear, we must be "slow to speak." This is not the usual characteristic of young people, except when they are indulging in the expensive luxury of a fit of sulks. We know that in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, and so we must try to learn this new lesson, difficult though it may be. "Slow to speak" includes a certain reticence which keeps us from always airing our opinions and trying to force them on our companions. We should be "slow to

speak" about ourselves, remembering that none of us are as interesting to our neighbours as we are to ourselves, for each soul has its own joys and sorrows and its own individuality.

We must also avoid publishing abroad anything which we have learned about another if it be to his disadvantage. Holy Scripture speaks very plainly on this subject. We are told: "Rehearse not again a wicked and harsh word, and thou shalt not fare the worse"; and again, "Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour, let it die within thee, trusting that it will not burst thee."

"*Let it die within thee*"—what a beautiful motto this would be for a Child of Mary who frequently sins against charity by retailing unkind reports. How many scandals, quarrels, and other evils we might prevent if we had the courage to control our tongues! It is not always easy, for the knowledge of a secret gives us a certain importance in our own eyes, and makes us long to attract attention. Sometimes what we are burning to reveal is not in itself bad, but it would be a breach of confidence, an indiscretion, or a want of tact to mention it. To control our tongue is a sign of a high degree of virtue, for St. James tells us: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (St. James iii.); and it is not easy to attain perfection, as we know from the sad experience of constant falls.

Is there any special means which will help us to be "slow to speak?" Yes, the great and effectual means to attain this end is always to reflect before speaking, hence to curb our natural im-

petuosity. You are eager to reveal something, but it is wiser to keep silence ; so *let that word die within thee.* You may have many a fall before you succeed, but go on striving, and perseverance will crown your efforts at last.

Finally, St. James bids us be "slow to anger." If we obey faithfully the two preceding injunctions, it will not be so difficult to restrain that "anger which worketh not the justice of God." It was related once in a country newspaper that a large number of people, as they were returning home after the Sunday morning service, were attacked by a swarm of wasps and severely stung. As it happened, these people had in no wise provoked the attack, but the real aggressors were some small boys who had discovered a wasps' nest while the service was going on. They had spent a delightful morning in stoning the wasps by a long-range fire, and then, boylike, took to their heels when the congregation began to appear. Seeing a number of people coming down the road, the wasps evidently concluded that they were about to sustain a fresh attack, so they flew out to sting as many as possible. "It was rather hard on the people," you say ; "the wasps should have attacked the boys." True ; but wasps know no better than to sting those nearest, whereas we poor human beings, in spite of our superior intellectual powers, often get waspish and sting the innocent. Unless we are "slow to anger," we are pretty certain to sting the wrong parties. We have done it so often in the past, and are exposed to commit a like error again.

Do you remember the day when your brother played you a practical joke before setting out to his business? Your temper was roused, and as you could not have it out with him, you stung anyone else who came near. It was a miserable day at home for all the family, yourself included. Do you know any person who thus stings indiscriminately? If so, what is your conduct towards them? "Why, I avoid meeting them, of course; and certainly should not choose them for my friends." Then remember not to imitate their conduct; and when you are tempted to get into a passion, beware, lest, like the wasp, you sting the innocent and render yourself an object of dislike. People who have a violent temper should take means to conquer themselves. Often it is a remedy to retire to your room and let the fire of passion die out. A brisk ride on your bicycle may calm the angry feelings. Music, we know, has a soothing influence; but of course there is the difficulty that we cannot, every time we are in a temper, leave our work and go to the piano. In that case we must face the difficulty, and strive at least to conceal our angry feelings. Let them boil interiorly: this will only increase your merit: but do not give them a vent, or there will be an explosion. Practise self-control.

It is interesting to see what different means some people have used to conquer their anger. The father of Charlotte Brontë, the novelist, had a peculiar outlet. When he felt himself getting into a violent rage, he used to go out alone into the woods and fire off his pistol at the clouds, using blank cartridges. During his last illness it was a

satisfaction to him even to pull the trigger when he was tempted to give way to anger. His weak hand, however, had not sufficient strength at last to press the stiff spring, so he sent the pistol to the jeweller's in order that another spring might be put in which would make the pistol go off more easily. He died three days after so doing, and up to the day of his death continued to relieve his feelings by pulling the trigger.

Such a means of conquering anger is extraordinary, but it is far preferable to offending God. Each one should see for himself what means are most efficacious and practical for his particular case and employ them accordingly. When a Child of Mary is really in earnest about subduing anger, she will not fail to find some little practices which will help her in the struggle against herself. Pride thrives when passion is indulged, and the man who cannot brook a contrariety without getting into a rage is nourishing this vice in his bosom. Anger grows in a person, and what a fearful thing these attacks of temporary insanity are: reason abdicates her throne, and, as we say, "such a one is beside himself." Our neighbour is scandalised or disedified, and God is offended often for a mere trifle, such as an object lost or broken. These are unpalatable home truths, are they not? Nevertheless, they are true, and the only wise line of conduct is to look them in the face and see how we can mend matters. Prayer and a good will will help us through, and little by little we shall, with our Immaculate Mother's aid, learn to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger."

LITTLE FOXES."

Part I.

In the Holy Land the vine is extensively cultivated, though not to the same extent as in olden times. A vineyard was then a very pretty sight, surrounded by its hedge or low wall. In the midst rose the watch-tower, and near it was the wine-press, which usually consisted of two hollows, one above the other, cut in the rock, the upper hollow being perforated. At the time of vintage, the treading of the wine-press was accompanied with songs and feasting, much as we rejoice in the harvest-home festival. It is meet we should give thanks when God bestows on us the fruits of the earth: were He to withhold them, privations and famine would inevitably follow. The husbandman who rejoiced in an abundant vintage was reaping the fruit of his labours. He had planted and watched over the tender vines, and when the fruit was ripe there was still a danger that it might be devoured by the foxes which abounded and prowled about at dusk, especially in the stony country about Bethlehem. If the watchers were not vigilant, whole tracts of vines might be utterly devastated in one night. These facts throw a side light on the words of Holy Scripture: "Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines, for our vineyard hath flourished" (Canticles ii.). In vain the

vineyard *had* flourished if the foxes obtained entrance there and silently accomplished their work of destruction.

There is a vine of which Jesus our Saviour speaks when He tells us: "I am the Vine, you are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me" (John xv.). By the beautiful figure of the vine and its branches Jesus teaches us what a close union exists between Himself and the Christian soul that is in a state of grace, and He also points out the necessity of His disciples bearing the fruit of good works which are the practical expression of true virtue.

Your soul, Child of Mary, is a branch of the living Vine; by sanctifying grace you are united to Him as intimately as the branch is to the trunk. You must bear fruit; but just as in the Syrian vineyards there were foxes that destroyed the vines, so there are little foxes that work havoc in your vineyard and rob God of the fruits which He has a right to expect. These foxes are the minor defects which not infrequently neutralise all a girl's good qualities. Thus, we hear a mother say: "My daughter is so affectionate, truthful, and industrious; but she does worry me so by her untidiness."

Now, want of order is not a sin in itself, though it may lead us into sin and cause our parents and friends to commit faults of impatience, anger, or uncharitableness. Most mothers know what particular little foxes ravage the fair vineyards of the souls of their children. You perhaps know what

prevents a sister or a friend from being loved as much as she deserves. Are you equally well acquainted with the little foxes that frequent your vineyard? They creep in and do their work silently but surely. They do not reveal their presence by yelping, but you can track them by the mischief they have done.

Suppose we go fox-hunting together. It will take more than one day's hunt to unearth all the foxes, but just as the hunting season consists of consecutive meets, so we shall have to return steadily to the chase. It is important to notice at the outset that these little foxes which we intend to follow up are not precisely what we call great vices or glaring faults of character. They are minor defects, and most of us must plead guilty to some of them. Let us not confuse them with the besetting sin or predominant passion. They are little bad habits which, though sometimes they may be traced to our predominant failing, are just as frequently quite independent of it. Thoughtlessness, untidiness, inconstancy, want of tact, are examples of these minor defects. We do not, as a rule, mention these faults in confession, though we may have to accuse ourselves of the sins into which they lead us. We shall find plenty of these foxes, and if we are not careful they will elude our vigilance with their usual cunning. Like the fox, they never lose courage, but defend themselves to the last.

Let us begin by the defect of *thoughtlessness*. It is a common failing of young people, and our Children of Mary are by no means exempt from it. We so often hear a girl reply, when reproved

for some little fault, "I did not think"; and she imagines that this settles the question and exonerates her from blame. She had no *ill* will, and so she feels aggrieved when brought to book by her parents or superiors. The consciousness of the absence of evil intentions deceives her, and she does not realise that it is not sufficient to have no bad intentions, but she must have a *good* will to do what is right. Thus a girl has been sent out to purchase four articles: she returns with only three of them, and when asked for the fourth, her answer is ready—she forgot. A sister's birthday passes and no letter is written; an invalid requires some attention but does not get it. A meal ought to be ready by one o'clock, but the cloth is not even laid when the clock strikes. A day of obligation falls on a week-day, but our Child of Mary forgets to go to Mass; and she eats meat inadvertently on a fast day. In most of these cases the culprit considers it a sufficient excuse to say, "I quite forgot," forgetting how much parents and friends are inconvenienced or exasperated by her thoughtlessness.

Yet, if she is promised a present on a certain day, if she receives an invitation to a pleasant soirée, or if her quarterly allowance is due, her memory is excellent for these facts. How is it that it fails so frequently when it is a question of duty? In truth, there is what has been called "the memory of the heart," which makes us remember anything agreeable. Some people have a bad memory—they cannot learn by heart; others have the power of remembering certain events, even to

the minutest details. This faculty for retaining is evidently a gift of God; but it is true that we can, to a certain extent, cultivate our memory. Suppose that, having left school for some years, you take up some branch of study which requires memory—a language, for example. You will find in the beginning that a column of words will take you an hour or more to learn, but as you progress you will gain in speed and learn by heart with ease and rapidity. If a thoughtless girl were to take up a branch that requires memory work, she would strengthen this faculty, and her daily work would be all the better done in consequence. Here we anticipate an objection: "My time is too fully occupied; I have neither leisure nor means to take up such a study." Then try some other remedy to destroy this mischievous fox.

Be methodical in your work; have a definite plan. If you have the drawing-room to dust, do it methodically. Do not first dust a chair, then run off to a whatnot, and again return to your chairs. Dust all the things of a kind one after another, and thus you are less liable to forget. Have a definite time for each employment. Make a note of what has to be done, and thus the defect of thoughtlessness will soon be conquered. If you are very much in earnest, you will punish yourself in some way for forgetting. Perhaps you could afford to give a penny to the poor each time you inconvenience others by your forgetfulness. This is an energetic measure which will speedily kill the little fox. A child is often cured of it by the promise of some reward. *Take the means if*

you would attain the end. When you are as thoughtful about the interests of others as you are of what concerns you, you may be sure the little fox, thoughtlessness, is dead and buried.

Untidiness.—This is another common defect. So many girls are untidy in their rooms, persons, or belongings. An untidy girl patronises pins rather than needles; she has an aversion for thread and buttons. Her room is in disorder: boots are found on the bed and hats on the floor, while gloves take a bath in the water jug. An untidy Child of Mary ignores the use of a peg, lacks neatness in her person, and dresses in a slovenly manner. You may trace untidy people throughout the house by the disorder that reigns in the various rooms through which they have passed. "It is no sin," is their argument. No, not in itself; but what waste of time, loss of temper, and extravagance result from it! How many a home has been made miserable by untidiness on the part of a mother. There is but one remedy for this defect, and that is to *keep things in order.* Have a place for each article, and put it back at once when you no longer require it. If you are untidy you know what trouble you get into in consequence, and greater evils will result later on when there is not the salutary check of a mother's displeasure. So set to work generously and take an example from an earnest Child of Mary who effectually ran to earth this tiresome little fox. This was how her amendment was effected. She had a brother, a sharp little fellow, who, like all boys, was very fond of marbles. Blanche turned

this to her own advantage by promising him a glass marble every time he found any of her belongings lying about. Urged by the desire to increase his little store, Master Teddy, with lynx eyes, set to work and mercilessly piled up every stray article on a sideboard, and on top of the heap was a little note claiming the promised reward; and he even went so far as to claim *two marbles* for one pair of gloves, alleging that they were two separate "finds." This went on for some little time, but gradually the "finds" diminished, and Master Teddy was one day heard lamenting dolefully to a little friend that it was a great shame Blanche was getting so "awful tidy"; in other words, she had killed the fox with *a good will* and *an energetic measure.* Try this receipt, you will find it thoroughly efficacious.

Did you ever meet a *tactless* individual? They are as plentiful as blackberries, and a deal of mischief they make, and many of the culprits are no longer in their teens. Tact consists in saying the right thing at the right time. A tactless person, as we commonly say, "always gets himself into hot water." Now, as too much heat is by no means a pleasing sensation, we may be sure the tactless individual did not mean to plunge himself into the caldron. He fell in, notwithstanding the best of intentions to keep out. Then he feels aggrieved at the consequences, which turned out so differently from what he anticipated.

Let us take a concrete example of a tactless girl, and learn a lesson from her conduct. She will bring up the subject of examination, and speak

of her own success before a friend who has failed to pass. At dinner or in company, she introduces topics which lead to a heated discussion. Before a poorer friend she will display her jewels and money, and has a habit of asking questions which people cannot always conveniently answer, and cross-questions if the reply is evasive. In presence of a girl whose engagement has been broken off by death, our tactless friend will expatiate on her own approaching marriage. She will parade her religion in a ball-room, and in presence of non-Catholics will blurt out that she must go to confession, and therefore cannot accept some invitation. If a sister makes a slip of the tongue, she calls attention to it; if her friend has been crying, she will ask in presence of others: "What is the matter, what has upset you?" She will make a remark about some physical defect in a person who is absent in presence of one who has the same infirmity. If a visitor mistook her sister for one of the maids, our tactless individual will at once inform her sister of the mistake that was made. In a word, she is always cheerfully saying the wrong thing with the best of intentions, and constantly blurts out what a prudent person would discreetly withhold.

What is the remedy for want of tact? All depends on whence it proceeds. It may arise from want of judgment, thoughtlessness, impetuosity, lack of education, or bluntness. Each case requires different treatment. When it arises from lack of judgment, it is most difficult to cure, since those who are most flagrantly guilty are the last to admit

it, and generally remain permanently blind. The only remedy in this case is humility, which leads us to ask advice, to accept a reproof, and to profit by our blunders. A kind friend will, if asked, show us wherein we have erred, and in future we can at least avoid like occasions. *Thoughtlessness* is a common cause of many of our girls failing in tact—they do not think; or it may result from a certain impetuosity of character which leads a person to act first and think afterwards. Evidently the only remedy in this case is to "look before you leap." Learn to reflect before speaking, and you will refrain from expressing all you feel. *Lack of education* is another fruitful cause of want of tact. The remedy in this case is to learn the usages of society and to observe the rules of etiquette and politeness, which will prevent blunders and spare us many a humiliation. The same remedy is efficacious when the defect arises from bluntness, since courtesy teaches us not to say all we think, but to consider our neighbours' feelings.

Mary, our Immaculate Mother, showed her kind tact, if we may put it thus, when she drew our Lord's attention to the fact that the wine for the marriage feast was running short. She wished to spare their hosts any unpleasantness, and prevent the guests from noticing the deficiency.

Perhaps you are often reproved for want of tact —you feel how much you need it; yet it seems so intangible, as it were, for the same occasions do not constantly repeat themselves. Never mind, do not be discouraged; learn from these occasions to deduce certain inferences which will guide you in

the future. Thus, from the examples cited above, we may learn to avoid whatever may mortify a friend, stir up strife, open up an old wound, or bring ridicule on our religion. Hence we see, one great means of acting with tact is to cultivate a spirit of Christian kindness.

Egotism is another fox that ravages the vineyards and devours the grapes of charity, zeal, and heroism. The etymology of the word explains its meaning. Ego, "I," or, as some of our girls put it, "*my own dear little self.*" Yes, *self is very dear* in more senses than one, for it costs us much suffering, and deprives us of many graces. Take a Child of Mary who has certain virtues, such as truthfulness, industry, and piety; but all these good qualities are marred by a certain selfishness in little things. She would shrink from some notable sin of avarice which would greatly pain her parents; she would not dream of asking for more than her share of the fortune, but she is selfish in little things. She will always take the most comfortable seat in the room; must read a new book before any other member of the family can get hold of it; will not put herself out to run and post a letter or fetch something from upstairs; grumbles if she is disturbed at her work, and always requires to be waited on. Her constant query is, "Why cannot someone else do it?" Now this is not what we expect from a Child of Mary. Our dear Mother rejoiced in being "the handmaid of the Lord," and it ill becomes her children to rejoice in having handmaids at their beck and call, especially when the train of handmaids in-

cludes a mother or an elder sister. Such faults are frequently seen in girls who have been spoiled and waited on by their parents. They have consequently grown up selfish, and the habit has taken deep root in their souls. Frequently they are perfectly unconscious of their egotism.

Doubtless you know some girls of this description, and they are far less lovable than the friend who lives for others and forgets herself. This defect may also spring from laziness, immortification, or want of thought; sometimes all three of these causes may combine to form this bad habit. For a girl who is sincerely pious, it will be sufficient to signal the enemy, and she will awake, as it were, and begin to hunt this "little fox" bravely. If it comes from pure laziness, it will be more difficult to conquer; but the victory is certain to those who have a good will. A young girl once cured herself of this in a novel way. Whenever she found herself saying or thinking "*I do not want*" or "*I do not like*," she used to say to herself, "*You are nobody*"; and then she bravely did the very opposite to what her inclinations suggested. Such a generous girl soon acquired the virtue of unselfishness. If your conscience reproaches you with this fault, imitate her example. Take as your model Him "Who pleased not Himself," and this defect will speedily be cured.

Here is a portrait of a thin, wiry, sharp-nosed fox which resembles a cat with its proverbial nine lives, inasmuch as he is most difficult to kill; prowling and ferreting everywhere, he stealthily does his work of destruction. We call him *curiosity*,

and our girls know him very well, since he has a preference for the first fruits of the young vines. Let us see how they behave when this fox commits his depredations in their vineyard. Suppose Nancy to be a bright, merry, good-natured, industrious girl who is constantly giving way to curiosity. She will pretend to be reading when in reality she is listening to a conversation which is not intended for her. If she is forbidden to read a book, instead of acquiescing in the judgment of her parents, she cannot rest until she has found out at least something about its contents. She will speak of some matter with assurance, and will assert as certain what she merely suspects, in order to deceive her listeners and to make them believe that she is in possession of all the facts. This ruse has often succeeded in entrapping the unwary. Nancy has no objection to reading a letter which she finds, and justifies herself by saying that it contains nothing important, though this could only be known *after* she had gratified her curiosity; nor would she like to be caught in the act. It is bad enough when Nancy tries to learn her neighbours' business; but at least what she finds out may be harmless in itself.

The great danger of this defect is that often it leads girls to be curious about things which they ought never to know, for there is a knowledge of evil which is dangerous to the holy virtue of purity, and all curiosity on this subject must be promptly checked. Many girls have paid the penalty of indulging their curiosity by the bitter remorse or the violent storm of temptations which followed.

Many a girl reads a forbidden book merely out of curiosity, and thus learns evil which she would give anything to forget; but the sinful thoughts remain in her mind, and she cannot get rid of them. This result is the natural consequence of her indiscretion. Whoever puts his head in a hornet's nest must expect to be stung, even when he had no intention of annoying the hornets, but merely wished to examine their nest. The man must pay for his folly as well as for his vices.

Those who are curious should try to turn their thoughts away from their neighbours' concerns and take up some occupation *that absorbs the mind.* Active work is one great remedy for curiosity, a second is salutary fear of injuring our own soul by what our inquisitiveness may lead us to discover. Life is short, and if we would do our work well we shall have little time to investigate curiously what concerns our neighbour.

Here is a striking example of the consequences of an act of curiosity which in itself was not a sin. In the days when Catholics were persecuted in Scotland, a respectable Scotch farmer contrived a hiding-place for a priest. It was a tiny dark hole under the ground floor, and the farmer's wife took the priest his food daily. She had a daughter, a girl of sixteen, who was accustomed to help in the home, and who knew nothing of the priest being hidden in the house; but she had noticed that food disappeared from the larder. Not being able to account for this, she mentioned the fact to her mother. She was told not to trouble about it, as some had been given away. The girl, who

was extremely curious, determined to find out to whom the food was given, and watched her mother carefully. She finished by discovering the truth, but said nothing to her parents about it. A few days later, Government spies visited the farm in search of Papists. The farmer and his wife were not at home, so the daughter had to receive them. They saw by her manner that someone was concealed in the house, and frightened her with terrible penalties if she did not reveal the hiding-place. She yielded to their threats and betrayed the good priest, who was shortly after hanged, drawn, and quartered. Such were the consequences of a girl's curiosity, and if, in our days, there is not the same danger of curiosity being the cause of loss of life, it leads to a great many serious inconveniences and quarrels in families. Curiosity, like want of tact, gets people "into hot water," and often keeps them there for an indefinite time.

Here is another example that happened nearer our own times. A gentleman, who was employed in a large bank, was led by some scoundrels into a snare. Making a cat's-paw of him, they robbed the bank and absconded. He paid the penalty of his weakness by ten years of hard labour. His poor wife had a small income, sufficient to keep herself and an only child, who was then six years of age. The wife at once emigrated to America, took another name, and was most careful that her child should not know of the father's misfortune and disgrace. Years passed, and the time drew near when the father was expected home. The daughter, unfortunately, was very inquisitive; and

one day she went so far as to open her mother's desk and read some letters which she found there. Then the poor girl learned the story of her father's misfortune, and knew that she was a convict's daughter. The mother was heart-broken when she discovered what had happened. One act of idle curiosity had laid bare what she had taken such pains to conceal for so many years; only the day before she had written to her husband: "Our child, thank God, knows nothing, and is expecting you home from *your long journey*." How bitterly that girl paid for her curiosity, and what anguish it brought on her parents.

Do you understand better now what we mean when we speak of "the little foxes"? We have unearthed *thoughtlessness*, *untidiness*, *want of tact*, *selfishness*, and *curiosity:* that is not bad for one day's sport. At the next "meet" we shall find others. In the meantime, fix well in your mind the portrait of these little foxes, that you may instantly recognise them when, with stealthy steps, they approach to destroy the vines in the vineyard that hath flourished.

"LITTLE FOXES."

PART II.

TO-DAY we start on another hunting expedition, and let us hope we shall have as many brushes as we had at our first day's sport, if not more. What a numerous litter of mischievous foxes pride brings forth! There are the little defects of vanity, self-conceit, affectation, false shame, a criticising spirit, flippancy, positiveness, shyness, and fussiness. Many more might be cited, but to discuss all would lead us into a regular treatise on humility; besides, you must have the pleasure of unearthing some yourselves. The defects mentioned above are perhaps those to which our girls are most subject, for we are not treating here of the grosser forms of pride which take the proportions of besetting sins.

Perhaps you have heard of the beautiful Lady Waterford, who was so intimate with our beloved Queen Victoria. The real charm of this beautiful girl was her utter lack of vanity and self-consciousness, as the following story proves. One evening, when ascending the staircase to a ball-room, she turned to Lady Stuart de Rothesay and said: "Mamma, do look at that girl's with the handsome profile." The girl was perfectly unconscious that it was a side-glance of her own

lovely face which was reflected in one of the wall mirrors. What a lesson to some of our girls who cannot pass a large shop without drawing themselves up to admire their fine figures in the plate-glass windows. Vanity spoils many girls who would be so lovable if only they could overcome this despicable feminine weakness which consists in attaching undue importance to externals.

To seem, rather than *to be*, is the aim of a vain woman. Vanity feeds on good looks, fine clothes, and whatever glitters in the eyes of the world. In its most acute form, it stifles charity and piety while the lesser forms weaken these virtues without actually killing them. Vanity shows itself in a person's toilet, bearing, and conversation. It is a very sad defect, because it grows so rapidly, and is incompatible with that modesty which should be the ornament of every Christian maiden, and still more of Children of Mary. Christian humility and modesty forbid us to attach undue importance to dress: to supply by artificial means those good looks which nature has refused. Sometimes our girls ask if it is a sin to use a little rouge and to embellish their features just a wee bit? Here is an answer to this question, given by a well-known Jesuit: "There is no harm, provided you *only colour one side.*" A girl who "makes up" is such a sorry spectacle when on a sea journey she falls a victim to sea-sickness.

While other faults at least assume a mask, blind vanity flaunts her false pretensions in the face of the world. If only the girls who parade their

vanity could read the thoughts of those with whom they come in contact, what a salutary humiliation it would be.

Self-conceit is another form of pride which consists in showing off our attainments, in overrating our acquirements, and imagining that little or nothing is beyond our capabilities. Thus a girl considers herself an excellent mathematician because she knows the first four rules of algebra and a little geometry. Self-conceit, like vanity, looks chiefly on the surface and rarely goes below. How we all dislike vanity in others! "What a pretty, accomplished girl So-and-So is," remarked a lady to a friend. "True, *but she knows it*," was the reply; and here the conversation dropped.

Affectation is the superlative of self-conceit. Some people pose all their lives and act up to the adage "All the world's a stage." They seem to weigh every word, and to calculate the effect of all they do or say. A certain lady of good family was intensely conceited and affected. To attract attention seemed to be her sole aim, and she was in the habit of saying to her friends, "Do tell me *in confidence* what impression I have made on So-and-So?" As you may imagine, this caused great merriment, and the nick-name "Madame Impression" was quickly given to the lady in question. All are not so simple as to fish thus openly in all waters for compliments; they conceal the hook by praising a friend who is manifestly inferior to themselves, or by depreciating their own acquirements. If these artifices fail to land the desired compliment, there is anger and turmoil within.

What are the best remedies against vanity, self-conceit, and affectation? Simplicity and modesty. If we seek purely to please God and live in His presence we shall be less likely to trouble as to what people say or think about us. These beautiful virtues effectually check self-conceit, boasting, and affectation. If you know that you often give way to these faults, make a firm resolution never to seek to attract attention; and if praise is bestowed on you, do not *ruminate* on it for hours and days.

False shame is a mean little fox allied to those previously mentioned. We must not be ashamed of being poor, of our parents, nor of our piety. Some people make heroic efforts to keep up appearances, and pinch in private in order to give grand parties. There are girls who are terribly ashamed of being thought pious. They will assume a worldly tone, make fun of religion, and reject the reputation of being devout as an insult. Yet all the while, in their inmost soul, they are desirous of leading a Christian life, and may even contemplate entering a convent; but human respect makes them dread facing the opinion of their friends. Evidently the best means of killing this fox is to act up to our convictions and to brave human respect.

A criticising spirit also springs from pride. Those who have this defect are perpetually criticising their elders. They are always ready to blame whatever is planned by those in authority. Clearly this shows a want of humility as well as a lack of judgment. When a man stands on top of a mountain five miles above sea level he can see

for a distance of about two hundred miles around him in any direction ; but if he stands on a level plain, the eye only takes in a distance of about a mile or so. In much the same way, those who have the direction of affairs see farther than their subordinates. A measure which may appear absurd when a person is ignorant of the reasons which led to its adoption, is often seen to be perfectly reasonable when all the motives are known. Beware, therefore, of criticising measures, whether at home or in business. You have not yet sufficient experience to lay down the law. Age and contact with the world will enable you to acquire it ; and, in the meantime, you will find numerous opportunities of making acts of humility and submission, and thus gradually conquer your defects.

Flippancy in speaking to or of our parents and lawful superiors often accompanies a criticising spirit. This defect also attacks God's priests and holy things, and he who is guilty of it shows little reverence for religion. It shocks one to hear a Catholic speaking lightly of what we hold most sacred. How reverent our dear Lady was in all her conduct. Take her for your model, my child, and you will never allow any unseemly jest to pass your lips, or anything bordering on profanity ; nor will you, by a smile, encourage others to be irreverent.

Did you ever read a little comedy by Miss Edgeworth called "Old Poz"? "Old Poz" is a magistrate who will never admit that he is liable to make a mistake, and this opinionatedness nearly leads him to convict an innocent man. There are

many such people, and we find them very difficult to deal with; but at least, if they are old, their age has given them a certain amount of experience, and we must respect their grey hairs. It is harder to put up with a conceited *young* "Poz," who imagines she can "teach her grandmother." Are you always positive—unwilling to admit that you have made a mistake? Do you leave no stone unturned to prove that you were in the right and even veer round and shift your ground rather than be caught tripping? Have you a mania for contradicting equals and superiors alike? All these are unequivocal symptoms that you are related to "Old Poz." What makes some young people so positive? Dense ignorance, obstinacy, a very limited intelligence, and a certain inexperience. All these are fruitful sources of opinionatedness.

Naturally, the remedy to be employed differs with the cause. As we grow in years, we find that the colour of the chameleon is not the only thing about which it does not do to be positive. So often we have made mistakes in the past, and this should teach us to be modest in expressing our opinion, lest people say of us, as Sydney Smith said of Macaulay: "I wish I were as sure of anything as Tom is of everything." A certain diffidence in expressing an opinion, a modest deference to the views of others, becomes our dear Lady's Children. After all, suppose that in an indifferent matter you are in the right, but fail to prove it and assert your superiority, what does it matter? Is it not better to make an act of humility than to

squabble over straws? If you gain your point at the expense of losing your temper, you will have made an unprofitable exchange. Do not contend over trifles; reserve your energies for life's great battles: this is the wiser course. As often as you feel inclined to argue and dispute in order to "crow it over" others, make an interior act of humility, and keep silence. One good rule is not to give our opinion unless asked; having given it, not to cling inordinately to it, nor resign it condescendingly with an injured air. It is a decided lack of humility which leads our girls to pose as the family scapegoat when they have failed to carry their point, or to take refuge in the excuse that they misunderstood their opponents, or *vice versâ*.

Shyness is the very opposite to positiveness, but it is a troublesome little fox all the same. A shy girl does not open her mouth before strangers; she reddens if asked a simple question; she dare not play or sing except in her own home circle. Shyness paralyses all her capabilities for doing good. In a word, she hides her talents, and becomes a mere cypher incapable of taking the initiative in anything. Do you suffer from shyness? If so, have you ever examined whence it proceeds? Do you fear to come forward because you dread committing some blunder? Evidently this points to pride. There are other sources, such as inexperience of life, delicate health caused by overstrung nerves, or it may spring from an extreme diffidence of self. Age will remedy the first, and a tonic or change of air the second; while the third

must be vigorously attacked. You must conquer your shyness if you would avoid being condemned for letting your talents lie buried. "I have no talents," you object. This is not true; all have some gifts of God, and are expected to utilise them for His glory. All Mary's Children should be apostles in the world, and true zeal will enable them to conquer their shyness. Each time you give way to this defect by keeping in the background and avoiding society, you are strengthening a bad habit which may degenerate into a useless, selfish life; so be warned in time, and "come out of your shell" whenever it is necessary or advisable to do so. This will cost a good deal at first, but practice will soon render it easy.

How the little foxes differ! What a contrast between *shyness* and *fussiness*. Those whose vines are ravaged by the former think and act as though there was no work for them in the world; while those people who are fussy seem to think that they help to keep our earth spinning. They will interfere in their neighbours' work, display an abnormal activity, live in a constant state of agitation, and generally do more talking than work. Such people remind us of the Chinese when they assemble at each eclipse of the sun, believing it to be attacked by a dragon; then all the Chinese officials assemble in Peking at the Board of Rites in order to *rescue the sun*. This, they imagine, is effected by means of prostrations, burning of incense, and the beating of drums and gongs. All these rites are supposed to frighten the dragon, who takes flight, and when the eclipse is over, the Chinese rejoice in their

victory. They have delivered the sun from imminent danger!

You smile at the absurdity, and condemn it as "a childish ignorance"; but are there not many Christians who act as though they imagined that God could not govern and protect His creatures without their help? Fussy people are a hindrance rather than a help in a house, and their officiousness gives great annoyance. How can you kill this little fox? By keeping calm and doing your *own* work quietly. If you have to superintend servants, give your orders calmly, and allow people *the time* to execute them. Do not put it into their mind to thwart you by anticipating such intentions. Have you ever worked under a fussy person? Then you know how wearying it is, when you are doing your best to finish your work quickly, to be continually asked when it will be done. From your own unpleasant experience, learn at least never to subject others to this trial; and if you have to endure such tyranny, profit by it to acquire patience and forbearance.

We have unearthed nine little foxes. There are many more which are equally destructive, but we cannot deal with all the little defects to which girls are subject, and that make them less amiable and less like their Immaculate Mother. From this chapter you may learn what evils little things may bring about. You would hardly imagine that grasshoppers could stop a train. Yet this actually happened in France in the summer of 1901, when enormous swarms of grasshoppers invaded the district, advancing in dense masses along the

railway cuttings. The countless horde covered the rails, blocking out the track, and succeeded in stopping a goods train near Pampron. It took a gang of navvies over twenty minutes to remove the dead grasshoppers. The way had to be cleared with shovels, and the wheels of the engine cleaned before the train could proceed.

Would you keep your vineyard free from little foxes? Would you keep the beautiful grapes with all their bloom untouched for the Master of the vineyard? Then, while you are young, cultivate good habits which effectually destroy those defects which we have called "little foxes." Here is a beautiful thought about the force of accumulated bad habits. It is taken from an essay on "Winter" by Alexander Smith:

"The white flakes are coming at last. Stretch out your hand and the meteor falls into it, lighter than a rose-leaf, and in a moment is a tear. It is as fragile as beautiful. How innocent in appearance is new-fallen snow, the surface of which a descending leaf would dimple almost; and yet there is nothing fiercer, deadlier, crueller, more treacherous. On wild uplands and moors it covers roads and landmarks, and makes the traveller wander hopeless for miles till he falls down exhausted. . . . Welded by centuries into an avalanche, it slides down the dizzy hold and falls on an Alpine village, crushing it to powder. A snowflake is weak in itself, but in multitudes it is omnipotent. These terrible crystals have stayed the marches of conquerors and broken the strength of empires."

All this applies with terrible force to little evil habits—so innocent, but falling thicker and thicker, incrusting the soul ; and the incrustation does not melt of itself: the Sun of Grace from above, and the heat of love from within, find it hard to thaw in a moment what has taken months and years to accumulate.

If you are wise, Child of Mary, you will not let these defects accumulate, for " Prevention is better than cure."

SOWING AND REAPING.

WHAT a pretty sight it is to see the land sown, with its long furrows all marked out in even rows. The sower passes, and places the tiny grains in them; then the earth is lightly raked over the seeds, and the sower leaves them to God, Who alone can cause those germs to fructify. Man can only sow: the Creator must give the increase. The birds perched on the neighbouring trees watch the seed being cast into the ground, ready to carry it off as soon as they have an opportunity. But the sower watches also, and often our feathered friends come off with but a scanty meal. Months pass by; gradually the seedlings put forth the tender blade, which grows daily higher. The ears begin to form, God's beautiful sun gradually ripens the corn, and, by August, the harvest will be ready for the sickle. Then the reapers arrive; early and late they are at work cutting and gathering in the corn. The gleaners follow in their track and pick up the stray ears. When the harvest is gathered in, the sower is amply rewarded for his toil and fatigue. He sowed his seed anxiously: many a time perhaps he was fearful lest storms or blight should deprive him of the fruit of his labours. Now the harvest is safely stored, and he rejoices as he gazes on his well-filled barns.

What lesson can we gather from these simple scenes which we have so often witnessed? Surely they remind us of those beautiful words of Holy Writ: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening let not thy hand cease, for thou knowest not which may rather spring up, this or that; and if both together, it shall be the better" (Eccle. xi. 6). Our Heavenly Father is ever sowing precious seed in the souls of His children, and "that seed is the Word of God." He speaks to His own interiorly, He enlightens them by His graces. These germs He tends carefully, that they may bring forth fruit for the harvest of eternity; for in all His dealings with us our Father "has a purpose beyond the grave."

God sends forth His priests to sow the good seed. It is their duty to preach the Word, in season and out of season; to administer the sacraments and to watch over the seed which they have sown lest the world, like the birds of the air, devour it. They have an arduous task. Often it has been their lot to go forth weeping and casting their seeds, but they were strengthened by the grace of God, and, firm in their faith and hope, they looked forward to the harvest time when they should "come with joyfulness carrying their sheaves," knowing that those "who sow in tears shall reap in joy" in God's own time. Our missionaries go forth to foreign lands. For a time there is great difficulty, then the good seed begins to spring up, perhaps only to be destroyed by the burning wind of persecution. Thus it has been in China in recent years. Has all the good seed

perished? No, it will bear fruit again. God has His faithful servants in that heathen land, and since "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," we may prophesy a glorious harvest at some future period. But the priests are not the only sowers. Each human being is consciously or unconsciously sowing seed which, throughout eternity, will bear good or bad fruit. We cannot help having an influence for good or evil on those with whom we live; nor can we avoid moulding our character daily by the habits which we form.

This is a very solemn thought which brings before us our awful responsibility. Suppose we take the concrete example of a worldly family, and we shall be the better able to realise how evil seeds of pride, worldliness, and selfishness are sown by those who are not sincere Christians.

Mrs. X. and her family are practical Catholics, at least, as we generally understand the word. She attends Mass on Sundays, and frequents the Sacraments several times a year. Should the conversation turn on humility, she praises this beautiful virtue, and agrees with you that all Christians ought to be humble. This being the case, you expect that she will teach her five girls the necessity of being "meek and lowly of heart." How does she set about it? By progressive lessons and practical exercises without formally laying down set principles. In her house, dress is almost the sole and all-important subject of conversation; the latest novelty is purchased even when debts must be incurred to pay for it. Mrs. X. teaches her daughters to attach a great import-

ance to good looks; and they are all considered handsome, with the exception of one "ugly duckling," who is made to feel her inferiority, because her ugly nose and large mouth give offence. Beauty attracts attentions which are all the more agreeable if they come from those in a higher station of life. The girls' mental acquirements exist chiefly in their mother's imagination; for, like most vain girls, their accomplishments are superficial: the "ugly duckling" is the only one who really finds pleasure in study. One Christmas Gertrude came home with an unsatisfactory report and no prizes. Mrs. X. was exceedingly indignant *with the teacher*, and instantly *bought* Gertrude a handsome present as a reward for past laziness and an incentive to future indolence. Nor was the child allowed to return to a school where the mistress dared to speak frankly of her pupils' faults. Another time she was removed from a convent and sent to the local high school that she might meet the daughters of some fashionable neighbours. Mary, the youngest child, is now six years of age. She attends a dancing class and learns music, but is *too young* to receive religious instruction! She is more severely reproved for soiling a new dress than for telling a lie, and is sternly rebuked for the dire offence of speaking to a "dirty little beggar." Fits of temper are to be checked because "they spoil Mary's pretty face."

Sunday is the great exhibition day for recent acquisitions in the way of new fashions. Mrs. X. and her family go to church, conscious that their dress is faultless, and serves as a standard for

others. They pay more attention to their neighbours' dress than to the sermon. The whole family have neuralgia occasionally, and these attacks generally coincide with the wet Sundays. Should the priest fail to give them due honour, they make God pay the costs. They go to another church, or stay at home and set up an incurable hospital for wounded feelings. The eldest daughter is engaged to a wealthy atheist, who condescends to go to Benediction sometimes. This, together with wealth and good looks, compensates for his infidelity. Alms-giving is a duty ; moreover it is respectable ; so God has His *penny* every Sunday from each member of the family. People must be prudent and not give beyond their means ; besides, the girls' hats cost thirty shillings each, and the bill is still owing.

With such training how will Mrs. X.'s daughters grow up ? Seeds of pride fostered by a mother's hand bring forth fruit in due season. Hence the children are vain and frivolous : riches and pleasure are the objects for which they live. If they persevere in the faith, it is because no strong temptation to deny it has assailed them. On the threshold of eternity the mother may realise what evil seeds she has sown, but her repentance will not blight the harvest of pride, ambition, and worldliness. As men sow, they reap. If our children are to be modest and humble they must see humility esteemed and practised at home.

This is by no means a rare example ; there are thousands of such homes to be found. Doubtless you could name several families whom this little

snapshot exactly describes. Perhaps, my child, it has been your sad lot to have been brought up in this way. Now you are in earnest about saving your soul, and you know how hard it is to eradicate those evil habits and false principles which have been so carefully fostered from early childhood.

Some day you may be mistress of a house. When this happens, do not let it resemble your own home, but take care to sow the good seed abundantly both in the morning and evening of life, since you do not know "which may rather spring up, this or that, and if both together, it shall be better," and "blessed are they who sow upon all waters."

Have you the care of children now? Are you a teacher in a school, or a private governess? If so, you have a great work to do. Teachers, like parents, are sowers by profession; you have the young to educate, their minds are plastic, and take in every impression, and the things we learn in childhood sink deeply into the brain and influence our whole career. It is so true "that the hand which rocks the cradle rules the world," for it is that hand which is sowing the good or bad seed and training the future ruler. The seed falls into the soil, and for years may seem sterile, but it will germinate when we least expect to see it spring forth. Years perhaps pass over our heads before it attains full fruition, just as there is an immense interval between the seed and the timber. You are occupied in teaching others. This implies something more than communicating a certain amount of information to young scholars; you

have not only to instruct, but to educate—that is, to draw out the child's capabilities, to train his character.

If you are in a public school, do not consider that you have done your duty as a Christian and a Child of Mary merely because your pupils have passed an examination. The question is, will *you* be able to pass the great examination when you stand before God to render an account of how you have trained the children committed to your care? Do not let this thought trouble you if you are seriously doing your best, but if you think only of your pupils' intellectual improvement, if you have no care for their souls, and no interest in their moral training, you are not a fit person to be entrusted with children, unless you learn to look on your profession from a higher standpoint. It is not a mere means of earning your living, but a noble mission to train the future generations.

This does not mean that you are always to be preaching *at* or *to* your pupils, but that you should attach a primary importance to bringing them up first as Christians, secondly as good scholars, and these two aims can be both kept in view in every lesson. Never neglect the teaching of catechism, and let it be an interesting lesson, not merely a cut and dried repetition of the text. Often religion is crowded out of the curriculum of a school because there are so many subjects to be studied in view of the examination, and time cannot be found for all. This does not excuse you from sowing the good seed. The pupils must be instructed in the Christian doctrine; then why not turn an obstacle into

an aid by taking Scripture as an examination subject? It is often pitiable to see how little Catholics know of the Scriptures. To take them up with this object in view would remedy the evil, and offers no difficulty as regards the faith, since at the Oxford and Cambridge examinations, and many others in England, the questions are set and the papers examined by Catholic priests.

Other subjects besides religion afford the teacher an opportunity of leading the child's thoughts to higher things. History, for example, furnishes us with numerous proofs of the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue. Science reveals the wonderful power of God. There is, above all, the silent teaching of example. If your scholars perceive that you attach an extraordinary importance to dress and good looks, if they constantly hear you speaking about pleasures and new fashions, and see that you always make a favourite of the prettiest child in the class, these practical lessons will be learned far more quickly than their tasks in geography and grammar. A worldly-minded teacher sows innumerable seeds of vanity in the hearts of her pupils, and what a terrible harvest may result.

Do you now realise what a noble vocation is yours? Then make a firm resolution to act up to it. Let your first aim be to train your pupils, to *eaucate* them, while you do your best to cultivate their intelligence. If you have young Catholics to teach, see that they are instructed in the Catechism and prepared for the Sacraments. Should the parents be negligent Catholics, you have all the

greater need to give these little ones that spiritual training which is neglected by the parents. Devote yourself heartily to the work you have undertaken. Pray fervently for grace to fulfil your noble mission. Do not be discouraged when your labour seems sterile. Work on, for the good seed will bear fruit sooner or later, and in order to encourage yourself when tempted to discouragement, remember that "they who instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity."

HOME TRAINING.

THE previous chapter was chiefly addressed to those who are occupied in teaching the young, either in public or private schools. Let us hope that it enabled them to realise more fully that theirs is a noble mission. But there are other Children of Mary who have a greater influence still over the children. If the public school teacher or daily governess has such precious opportunities of sowing the good seed, those who have charge of the little ones in the nursery have also a great work to accomplish. To the mother and nurse falls the duty of cultivating the virgin soil. Often the eldest girl has to train her little brothers and sisters where there is an invalid mother, or when death has deprived the home of a mother's care.

Many of our Children of Mary are earning their livelihood as children's nurses. Often a girl finds herself called upon to take up the care of the home when she least expects it. Comparatively few of our sodalists enter convents or retire quietly "on the shelf." Most of them choose the married state, and those who think of so doing would do well to learn beforehand how to fulfil the obligations which may one day fall to their lot. This chapter will therefore treat chiefly of the education of very

young children, and notice that education to a certain extent precedes instruction in the earlier stages of our life, since we must first cultivate and develop those faculties with which children grasp the facts we would teach them. We cannot draw a hard and fast line between education and instruction.

In olden times, Pharaoh, the Egyptian tyrant, had given orders that all new-born Hebrew male children should be killed. A Jewish mother, having evaded this cruel law, hid her little son for three months. Unable to conceal him longer, she resolved to put him in a cradle of osiers among the bulrushes by the river's bank. Here Pharaoh's daughter found the child, took compassion on the babe, and adopted him. Miriam was sent to seek a nurse. She fetched her mother, to whom the princess gave the infant, saying, "Take this child, nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages." The mother received her child with joy, and named him Moses—*i.e.*, "saved from the waters." Henceforth she brought him up not as her son, but as the child of a royal house. Something similar has happened in your history. You were taken from your home, a child of wrath; the waters of baptism cleansed your soul from original sin; you were taken home and given back to your mother, no longer a child of wrath, but adopted by God. On that day you were named; nurse laid you in your little cradle. Do you remember the house in which you were born, and the room where your little cot stood? If so, go back there in spirit for a moment, and gaze at that little infant, so pure in God's sight that it was a protection for

the whole family; for how often God spares the guilty parents for the sake of an innocent child. A beautiful angel watched by your cradle, full of joy at being called to tend a soul so pure. Perhaps a Christian mother knelt beside that cradle, clasping your baby hand, and as she imprinted a fond kiss on your lips, begged of God to give her grace to train you for Him. She realised that to her the message came: "Take this child; train him for Me, and I will give thee thy reward." Thrice happy are the children who have had such a mother, one who realised her noble mission, one who saw in her child not a toy, a pastime, an object to enshrine in God's place in her heart, but a gift of God, a soul to train for Heaven. What an immense privilege and responsibility it is to have souls to train for the next world. How many parents fail in their duty towards their children by deliberately training them for their own ambition, the world, the flesh, or the devil. Alas! this is true even of those who call themselves Christians and Catholics. How many, as they compare the present and past, are forced to admit—

> But now, 'tis little joy
> To know I'm further off from Heaven
> Than when I was a boy.

If this be so, is it not in many cases due to defective education? We are, to a great extent, what circumstances have made us, but nothing has influenced our whole life for good or evil so much as our early training. Our own career bears this out. When did our education begin? When we were in our cradle, long before we could speak.

The human brain is ever acquiring knowledge and receiving impressions; nothing that awakens our attention is ever lost, and the imprints of childhood, when the brain is very soft, are deeper than those of riper years. They remain often latent, it is true, yet sometimes awaken like a giant "refreshed with slumber." Frequently the only souvenir that the aged seem to retain are those of childhood.

How often we hear a fond mother exclaim, "Where did the child pick that up?" Clearly from what he saw or heard. Shall we take a few examples of how children study and acquire knowledge?

Let us pay a visit to a nursery. We will look on without showing ourselves. There is Edgar Morton, junior, sitting on the floor playing. He is both pretty and clever, not merely in his parents' estimation, but others who are competent to judge are of the same opinion. Next December he will be five years old. He has been studying for the last four years, at least, and has already attained a certain proficiency in some branches. The first thing he studied was will power, and he devoted himself also to reading characters. His frequent experiments led him to discover the strength or weakness of will-power in those who tended him. He has now ascertained that father has a certain amount, nurse a little less, while mother's will-power, like an x in algebra, has a variable value, and may even stand for a *minus* quantity. When it has a positive value, if nurse's will be added, they just about balance Edgar's will. How did he discover this? By his repeated experiments. With father he generally had to give in; screaming had

no effect. When nurse bid him do something, kicking and shrieking served his purpose sometimes—always if mother was near, for he knew she would rush to the rescue and scold nurse for letting her darling cry. With his mother, the merest whimper succeeded; he obeyed her only in his father's presence, and on rare occasions when she got into a temper and gave him a slap, for which she always atoned by a very liberal distribution of sugar-plums, and as "coming events cast their shadows before," a slap from mamma was always suggestive of sugar-plums in the distance. The omen was infallible.

Such a scene has just taken place, and as Master Edgar discusses his sweets, and thus balances accounts, the scene winds up by the foolish mother coming in again to fondle her darling, and make *her* act of contrition, to which Edgar assents. "No, naughty mamma will never beat her darling again," and she will even go so far as to invite her darling to "beat naughty mamma," which the child, with more sense than his mother, refuses to do.

Is it strange that with such training the boy grows up self-willed, proud and disobedient? Do you wonder that he strikes out his own path, never consults his mother, and has no respect for her? True love and respect go hand in hand. If a mother plainly admits in her boy's hearing that she cannot manage him, that he will not obey her, is he likely to comply with her next command? Yet—what right has that mother to give up the authority which God Himself committed to her? "Take this child, and nurse him for Me."

Having settled the question of will power, Edgar proceeds to study sound, learning much from the vocal organs of his nurse. Without any preparatory studies as to the difference between a noise and a note, he can now distinguish the various tones in which nurse gives an order. She repeats her commands in varying tones. When the octave is reached, energetic action always follows. So Edgar takes his measures accordingly, and pays no attention to what she tells him until the leading note—a shrill soprano—is attained. The bare idea of obeying at the first command never occurred to him. Why should it? Here, again, the child's logic is faultless. A less clever child might have arrived at the same conclusion. From the nurse's conduct the child learnt this lesson: "Never obey till you are forced," and, childlike, he acts up to his principles, for children are consistent. Edgar will grow up a turbulent, unruly boy. Where did he pick it up? The answer is clear. He was taught it by his mother. She also gave him oral and practical lessons as to the treatment of enemies. If he fell and hurt himself, the darling was exhorted to beat the floor; he was even provided with the stick, while nurse scolded the unoffending planks. The child afterwards applies the same principle to his fellow-creatures when they injure him; surely they are more guilty than the planks. To his surprise, he is rebuked, perhaps punished, but the lesson has sunk in, and later on he will be spiteful, he will find revenge sweet. What more could a heathen mother teach her child? If the precept of charity and meekness were expunged from the Gospel, what difference would it make in

the teaching of certain parents? Absolutely none.

One more example of how Edgar studied, and also how he could put awkward questions to his parents. He knew his letters, and had begun to learn to read. The child was sitting on the sofa with a book full of pictures, trying to make out the easy words. He was engrossed in his occupation, when he heard a sound of angry words. Papa and mamma were quarrelling; strange words, not used at other times, were employed.

Edgar was not afraid; he had often seen such scenes before, but that day it annoyed him, for he was waiting to ask mamma something. At length the storm subsided, the door slammed violently—papa had gone. Edgar ventured down from his sofa. He had a picture in his hand, and had been trying to spell out some words. "Mamma, read that to me." The mother glanced at the picture, and read: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." "Run away, darling; I am busy." Conscience-stricken, the mother dared not even read the words to her boy, much less explain them, and speak of the loving Saviour who gave the precept. To a child, a parent combines with the Pope's privilege of infallibility that of impeccability. His creed is, "A parent can do no wrong." Hence, when Edgar is angry, he uses the same words, imitates what he has seen, and is disagreeably surprised by being punished, or at least scolded, for swearing; and many a foolish mother will go further, and even remark complacently, "How the dear boy resembles his father when in one of his little tempers." We reap what we have

sown. We can guess what sort of a boy and what kind of a man Edgar Morton is likely to be. *Do you train thus* the children entrusted to you? Do any of these scenes come home to you? Do they ever take place under your roof? If so, you know now where children pick up such things.

The little child is a good logician; supply him with the premises, and he will deduce the conclusion. If the premises be false, the child's deduction is nevertheless logically correct, and the error is due to the teacher, not to the pupil. Just as the constant dripping of water wears away the hardest granite—and to this work every little drop of water has contributed its share of friction—so every word a child hears, every action he witnesses, tends to develop his good or bad instincts. How much work has been done in the little seedling before the green leaf shows itself! and that leaf is but the result of previous labour. In the same way, countless imprints have been received in a child's brain long before he can show his knowledge. This is a serious thought for Christian parents and nurses. What a mighty change would come over the face of the world in a few years, if from now those who have the charge of Christ's little ones, realised their grave obligations and fulfilled them!

But if our children are to be well educated, those to whom they are entrusted must have those qualities and aptitudes which fit them for such great work. Some of the most important are natural gifts, others can be acquired by the help of God's grace and earnest endeavours. But the consideration of these qualities must stand over for the next chapter.

THE CARE OF CHILDREN.

In 1901 a law was passed in Norway which provides that any woman who wishes to get married must present to the proper authorities a certificate showing that she is skilled in the arts of cooking, sewing, knitting, and embroidering. This is an excellent provision, and were such an examination exacted in England there would be either fewer marriages or fewer wretched homes. One would be pleased, however, to see included in the bride's syllabus some knowledge of the care of children and of the hygienic conditions which are necessary for their physical well-being. These subjects might be studied instead of embroidery, for which few good housewives find much leisure.

What are the qualities which those who have the care of children ought to possess? There are many which are absolutely indispensable, since without them the nurse is certain to fail in her undertaking; others have only a secondary importance.

1. Piety heads the list, for how can an irreligious son bring up a child for God? The Christian nurse alone is capable of training a soul for heaven. Only those who realise that they have a great work to accomplish should put their hand to the plough.

A nurse who is religious has a silent influence for good over her little charges. Perhaps, Child of Mary, you remember the Christian mother or the dear old nurse who brought you up. She taught you your prayers, and when you did wrong tried to make you realise that sin offends God. There was nothing ostentatious or exaggerated about her piety, but it has influenced your whole life, and God alone knows how many precious seeds she has sown in your soul. Piety, like heat, diffuses itself, and religion should pervade the atmosphere in the nursery. Holy pictures should have the place of honour in the children's room. The little ones must be taught to lisp the names of Jesus and Mary. As soon as they begin to speak they should be taught to say simple prayers reverently. This is the work of the mother, or her substitute, and no Catholic must allow her children to be brought up by a non-Catholic nurse.

2. A nurse should be fond of children; this is a natural gift. True, many a woman who had no particular love for children before her marriage can devote herself to them when she becomes a mother, but this is the result of that maternal love which the Creator has implanted in the mother's soul. Some girls are very fond of children; others tolerate them. Only the first-mentioned should take up the profession of a nurse. What we do with repugnance soon wearies us. We may persevere for a time, but before long we are pretty certain to throw it up in disgust. It is contrary to human nature always to row against the stream, and to do violence to our inclinations. Hence, the second

necessary condition for a successful nurse is the love of her calling.

3. One who has charge of children needs a *firm* will. She must be able to obtain obedience without having recourse to threats. Still less should she continually invoke parental authority or resort to coaxing and bribes to ensure obedience to her commands. She will exact obedience to every order unless there is any real motive for revoking it. A good nurse is sparing of her words. She gives her commands in a *quiet, firm voice*, and shows, by her attitude, that she expects her young charges to obey at once. Many persons provoke children to disobey by their manner. They show that they anticipate resistance by screaming out the injunction, and will even gratuitously enumerate the list of punishments which are to follow should the children refuse to obey. Often it is not in the nurse's power to inflict these punishments, and the children know this, so they rebel merely to see how she will get out of the difficulty. Notice that a *firm* will differs from a *rigid* will. The former allows for circumstances, the latter will not accept a reasonable excuse.

Here are a few rules for ensuring obedience which may be helpful: (1) Do not give an unnecessary command. (2) Never exact more than a child can do; for example, give too long a lesson to be learnt. (3) Never raise your voice beyond measure; speak calmly and distinctly. (4) Give the order *once*. (5) Make the child feel the consequences of disobedience by some slight punishment. (6) Economise reprimands and penalties: let them be

proportioned to the offence. (7) Admit a reasonable excuse; hence, listen to the child's reasons for disobeying before you proceed to punitive measures. (8) Keep your temper, at least exteriorly, even if you feel angry interiorly. (9) Punish the *act* of disobedience, not merely the *consequences* of that act. For example: a mother tells her boy not to touch a certain vase. He disobeys; she repeats the injunction, which is again disregarded. The child deliberately disobeys six times, and no punishment follows. Six times, with a patience worthy of a better cause, the foolish mother repeats, "Did you hear me tell you not to touch that?" The seventh time the child disobeys—he drops the vase; then punishment promptly follows. Evidently the child must draw the conclusion that it does not matter how often he disobeys, provided he does not break an object, and he will make a resolution *not to leave a thing alone* next time he is told, but *to handle it more carefully*.

4. A nurse must be patient, for children are capricious, wearying, and exacting. We are apt to forget that they are not yet *reasonable* beings. There are little negligences which a wise nurse will sometimes have to overlook, for even when the child's will is good, it is often weak. The same lessons have to be repeated, for good habits form slowly. We must not be discouraged because our teaching does not seem to bear fruit at once. An acorn does not become an oak in a single night, and the Christian virtues do not, as a rule, develop very rapidly. Good wood is slow of growth; so it is with virtue.

5. A nurse must know her work. She should study some book on the care of children, that she may be able to detect physical defects or weakness, which, if not remedied, may endanger the child's career, and be the cause of great suffering. Many a poor cripple owes his infirmity to want of knowledge on the part of those who nursed him. Sometimes a fall, which seemed to have done no injury at the time, has produced fatal consequences in later years. The proper ventilation and heating of the children's rooms are important factors in procuring to our little ones "a sound mind in a sound body." Special precautions must be taken when any contagious and infectious diseases break out. Terrible loss of lives often results from negligence on this point, and ignorance is generally at the root of a nurse's carelessness. Cleanliness also plays an important part in keeping our children healthy. Plenty of good books on hygiene and the care of the sick can be had at our public libraries, and our Children of Mary would do well to read up some of these works rather than devote all their leisure time to novelettes.

6. A cheerful disposition is required of those who have the charge of children. In the nursery and home all should be bright. The early hours of life must not be saddened by premature gloom. Trials will come with riper age, but the child can afford to wait till his strength is equal to the burden. They should not be wantonly thrust upon him. Cheerfulness, too, has an influence on the children's health and intellectual development. Neither virtue nor knowledge will grow vigorously

in an atmosphere of melancholy which saps all the joy and sunshine of life and paralyses energy; so, let the nursery be the abode of cheerfulness. Never damp a child's mirth without necessity: children cannot be expected always to keep still and to refrain from making a noise. Provided they do not exceed the bounds of moderation, let them enjoy their games. A cheerful nurse will have a selection of stories for the wet days; she will also be ready to share in the children's games.

7. Vigilance is necessary on the part of the nurse, who must be quick-sighted to prevent the children from running into danger. She must watch over their health, but without fussiness. It is her duty, also, to train the children to virtue, to teach them to forgive, and to be kind and gentle. A Christian nurse or mother will sow day by day the seeds of piety, fear of God, purity and docility in the children's souls. She will be vigilant to pull up the weeds of pride, selfishness, and greediness, which spring up so early. Our little ones must only hear and see good examples, and constant vigilance is required to train them aright.

We have considered the most indispensable qualities which one who has charge of children should possess. There are some minor accomplishments which are extremely useful. Thus an elder sister, who can amuse the little ones by her skill in music or drawing, will always be welcome in the children's room.

If you have to govern the tiny kingdom we call a nursery, do not despise any little means of perfecting yourself in your calling. Knowledge is

easily stowed away, and will be useful many years after.

Do you see more clearly now, Children of Mary, what a noble mission is yours? If so, you will devote yourself heart and soul to it. You will pray for grace to train for God those committed to you. Day by day you will sow the good seed abundantly, knowing that "he who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings." The seed you are sowing will spring up sooner or later. It may be dormant for a time, but the germ of life is in the good seed. Some grains of wheat which were found in the pyramids of Egypt are said to have borne fruit after having been buried there for more than four thousand years. Books written hundreds of years ago are still a power for good in the world, and the child you are training may grow up a saint and have a widespread influence on his own and future generations. Most of the saints owed their sanctity, in great part, to the careful home training of a Christian mother.

A nursery is a little sanctuary, a temple of God, for the Holy Ghost dwells in each pure soul, and an angel watches over each child. If you have only the charge of the little ones who have not yet attained the use of reason, then remember that they are all pure in the sight of God; not a stain soils their souls. You alone, of all that inhabit that little sanctuary, have the fatal power of sinning.

These thoughts should stir us up to personal holiness. We must be worthy of our vocation if

we would avoid the awful charge of blood-guiltiness as regards the souls of these children who are so dear to Christ. Jesus, our Master, who was sparing in His denunciations, speaks most strongly of those who scandalise the least of his little ones. On the other hand, what a welcome He will have for those who have tended the young and taught them to walk in the paths of virtue. The devil is ever sowing the bad seed: he is in earnest in his evil work. This should spur us on to be zealous, and "in doing good let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not failing." When shall we reap the fruit of our labours? In God's time. We are not piece-workers, so we will toil on, content to wait while we profit by every occasion of sowing the good seed, *first in our own soul*, by cultivating the Christian virtues, and then in the souls of children under our care. Keep ever before your minds these words of Christ, "As long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me."

PART II.

THE CHILD OF MARY'S INNER LIFE

ON SELF-DENIAL.

As the time of our Lord's passion drew near, He gradually prepared His Apostles by prophesying all the sorrowful details. He did this that their faith might not be shaken when the hour of trial came. Peter rejected the idea of a suffering Messiah, and began to rebuke Him, saying: "Lord, be it far from Thee: this shall not be unto Thee." Jesus, turning, reproved him: "Go behind me, Satan (that is, adversary), thou art a scandal unto Me" (Luke ix.). Then Jesus went on to teach the disciples that they too must tread in the path of self-denial and suffering if they would obtain eternal life. He gave them this maxim of self-crucifixion: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me"; and to emphasize the necessity of mortification, He concluded His discourse with these solemn words: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36). The Christian code is one of self-denial, for as we are born into this world our work is born with us, and the tools are supplied with which to accomplish it. But rough toil is uncongenial to our effeminate fallen nature, and courage is needed to accomplish our duty bravely and constantly.

Notice our dear Lord prefaces His hard saying with the little word "if." He does not force man to yield Him an unwilling service. He respects the free will which He has bestowed on man, who can use it for God's service or employ it to defy his Creator.

We must *will* to follow Christ by practising self-denial. This is the first step in the right direction, and it is only by the help of God's grace that we are enabled to do this. Now suppose, Child of Mary, that you are thoroughly decided to walk in the narrow path that leadeth to eternal life, where the good Shepherd goeth before; but you would fain learn how this is to be accomplished in your daily life. Let us think out this problem together. Notice that Jesus, having laid down the preliminary condition of a good will, goes on to point out in partially figurative language the line of conduct which we are to follow. "*Let him deny himself*": these are stern words for poor human nature which is so prone to seek its ease and comfort. Then we are to *take up our cross daily*, and, lastly, we are *to follow Him*.

"Let him deny himself." How can we reduce this to practice? There are two little words which we use oftener than any others. They are "Yes" and "No." Now self-denial consists in saying "no" to ourselves; and those who can say this little monosyllable to themselves with as much determination as they sometimes say it to their neighbour, will advance rapidly on the royal road of the cross. Self is our great enemy: no man has a more inveterate foe than his own lower nature. Imagine a man struggling up a steep hill with

three ropes tied round his waist, by which three strong men are trying to pull him back. "He will never reach the top," you exclaim. Yes, he will if there be some one stronger than his foes to help him up. Under somewhat similar conditions we travel along life's road. The world, the flesh and the devil are all striving to pull us back ; and, of the three, the flesh is the strongest and most dangerous, on account of its constant proximity and our intense affection for it. God is there, stretching out His hand to help us on. If only we grasp it we are safe, for He Who is with us is mightier than all those who are against us.

When our brave soldiers were leading the attack on Spion Kop during the South African war, the foremost ranks knew that they were going to certain death. With that grim humour which often relieves intense tension of mind, one of the soldiers handed round a small looking-glass to his comrades, saying as he did so, "Bid good-bye to yourself."

This would be a good maxim for a Child of Mary. Life would be so much brighter if only we could say "good-bye" to self. You are tempted to consult your interests only, to listen to the flattering voice of self-love, to excuse yourself and to justify your conduct when you have sinned or blundered ; if when these temptations come, you "bid farewell to self," you will advance rapidly in holiness. An impertinent young officer once asked the great General Turenne how it was that he had lost certain battles. "Entirely by my own fault," was the simple answer, which had the effect of silencing and amazing his questioner.

You can see the beauty of this candid reply. Admiration is good, but imitation is better, so the next time you are in fault admit it candidly. How many petty quarrels and heart-burnings might be avoided in a home if people would candidly own when they have been at fault; in other words, if they could say good-bye to self-love.

It requires abnegation also to accept the truth about ourselves. We may see certain faults and plead guilty to them, but our neighbours can perceive other defects of which we are entirely ignorant. Two girls who were very great friends agreed that they would mutually help each other by pointing out any special fault they noticed in one another's conduct. True to the compact, one of them remarked to her friend, "Alice, I think you are rather inclined to praise yourself." "Indeed, Ada, I am not," was the indignant reply. "When I am falsely accused I never refute the accusation; I even let other people have all the credit of my good deeds, and I am most careful never to speak advantageously of myself." You see at once, reader, that Ada's kind remark was fully justified, and you feel sure that such a contract would be necessarily speedily annulled, for how could Ada do any real good when her friend was enveloped in such a thick mantle of self-conceit?

Certain truths about ourselves are extremely unpalatable, but they are wholesome, and if we are wise we shall accept them; and in this matter we may get help from friend and foe alike, for neither will flatter us.

To live above self, "to rise on our dead self" a step nearer heaven, involves self-crucifixion. What

does this mean? It means paying no attention to "likes and dislikes" when they hinder you on your road. That you cannot help experiencing these "likes and dislikes" is perfectly clear; but that as a Christian and a Child of Mary you should pay no heed to them is still clearer.

To be always occupied with self, to consider ourselves the centre of the little circle in which we move, to turn everything to our advantage, is opposed to that Christian charity which obliges us to love our neighbour as ourselves. There is no better means of remedying this evil than to deny ourselves. How many continually wind themselves up in their own thoughts, and what a difficulty they find in freeing themselves from the tyranny of living for self.

There is a remedy, however: devote yourself heart and soul to live for the good of others; study their pleasure and comfort, and you will be far happier than when you are circling round yourself, for this is an occupation that produces dizziness, which, in its turn, prevents our seeing clearly how things stand.

Do you understand now how you are to renounce self whenever it would hinder you from obeying the voice of God? So far, so good; but we have not only to deny ourselves, we must "take up our cross daily."

The active side of the combat is bravely to shoulder our cross. Each Christian has his own special cross to carry; at times it may seem heavier than others. What is your cross, Child of Mary? Most people are not at a loss to answer this question. It may be delicate health, the

friction of characters, very hard work, a violent passion, the jealousy of our equals, or a life of poverty. All these and many others may form the wood of the Christian's cross. We hear a Child of Mary exclaim : "I should get on all right if it were not for ——"; and here she names her cross.

It is easier to recognise our cross than to carry it courageously. Besides, it has to be carried to the end of the journey, and even a light weight wearies by its continuity. The first step towards carrying our cross is to grasp it firmly—that is, to be determined to bear it as courageously as we can. Some people like to choose a cross for themselves, which, in reality, is no cross at all, since it fits in with their inclinations. For example, here is a delicate Child of Mary, who insists on fasting even though the doctor has forbidden it. She has a bad appetite at all times, so most certainly it would be more profitable, both for her soul and body, if she were to force herself to eat what is necessary to sustain her strength. We must not let ourselves be deluded by the devil into thus choosing our cross. Works of supererogation are good only when we have performed the commonplace duties of daily life, which are often our greatest trials. Suppose you have an intense dislike to exert yourself. You suffer from laziness, or the bacteria of fatigue, as the scientists would perhaps say. Then your cross is to work, to be industrious, to put yourself out to find something to do. This will be very hard at first, but, if you are in earnest, you can cure the bad habit of laziness by employing precisely the same methods by which you acquired it. How

can you cure yourself? A poet will give you a plain answer:

> "How shall I a habit break?"
> As you did that habit make:
> As you gathered, you must lose;
> As you yielded, now refuse.
> Thread by thread the strands we twist,
> Till they bind us neck and wrist;
> Thread by thread the patient hand
> Must entwine, ere free we stand.

One caution before leaving this part of the subject —do not forget the little adverb "daily," for it is a word which means a great deal; not by fits and starts, but *daily*, must our cross be carried.

Finally, we are commanded to follow our Blessed Lord; and since, laden with our burden, we have to pass over a rough road, we must expect to fall sometimes. It is wise to foresee that in spite of a good will and generous efforts we shall sometimes fail. Is all lost, then? By no means, since our falls may be lessons in humility; and if every fault has helped us to know and to distrust ourselves more, it has not been all loss. Sometimes, as we toil on our way, the thick cloud of opposition may seem to block our path. What are we to do? Go bravely on, provided we are sure it is God's will; walk *through the cloud*, and you will emerge triumphantly on the opposite side. It is a great thing to have a firm confidence that what *has* to be accomplished can be done. An order was given to place a cannon on top of a steep hill. The men pulled and pulled, but seemed unable to move the heavy weight. At last they said to the sergeant in charge, "We can't do it." "Can't," he replied, "why, my good fellows, I've got the order in my

pocket." This evidently appeared conclusive, for the men gave "a long pull and a strong pull," and the cannon was hauled up. So in the spiritual life, it is a great thing to have confidence, and grace will be given to those who strive to obey what seems an impossible order.

"Follow Me" is our Master's command. To follow effectually we must keep him in sight. The path is narrow, the hedges that border it are thorny, and there are no seats by the way. We can never sit down and take our ease there; we must walk bravely on, forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forwards toward the goal. While we should not try to take two steps at a time, we must not be content to bring up the rear, or lag behind, for stragglers are apt to be cut off by the enemy. Neither may we hang back to please our friends, or to enjoy their society. Come what may, it is our duty to go forward, and "cheer ourselves with weeping," if need be.

Jesus leads the chosen band; Mary, our Mother, helps and protects us, and our Guardian Angel is ever near. Since He leads, we must follow with implicit confidence, without being over-eager to know what will be the next stage of our march. "One step enough for me" must be our motto, for "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Let us try to distinguish ourselves in the service of so great a Master by striving to perform each action as perfectly as possible, for this sums up the whole doctrine of Christian self-denial.

Perhaps, as you read this chapter, you have realised more clearly what our Lord would have you do. Are you ready to do it? Do not be

contented with a vague desire of denying yourself, but ask yourself, "What duty do I most often neglect? What sacrifice does God ask me to make? What good habit do I need specially to cultivate?" Answer these questions candidly, and then make *one* generous resolution. Thus you "divide and conquer," for—

> "One by one thy duties wait thee,
> Let thy whole strength go to each;
> Let no future dreams elate thee,
> Learn thou first what these can teach."

OCCASIONS OF SIN.

Do you remember learning your prayers when you were a little child? Possibly it was at a mother's knee that you first lisped the "Our Father" and "Hail, Mary." When you were able to get through the Creed, it was quite a red-letter day. Then you were taught those beautiful acts of faith, hope, and charity, to which the Church attaches so much importance, and which all Christians ought to know and recite frequently. There is another prayer which we have so often need to utter—the act of contrition. We learnt it as children, when as yet we were unable to fathom its meaning, which only dawned upon us as we attained the full use of reason. You know this prayer, Child of Mary; you use it daily, if you have persevered in the good habits acquired in childhood. Now you have a practical experience of those "*occasions of sin*" which we promise to avoid each time we recite the act of contrition. What do we mean by an occasion of sin? Let us examine this question, that we may the more earnestly determine to fly from them, as far as it lies in our power.

An occasion of sin is anything which may lead us to offend God. It may be a person, place, or thing, of which the devil makes use to tempt us. Thus, for a gambler, a game of cards is an occasion

of sin, because it stirs up his passion for gambling, and causes him to offend God.

There are two different kinds of occasions of sin, *remote* and *proximate*. The remote occasions are those which might ultimately lead us to do wrong, but which present no *immediate* danger. Thus food, sleep, pleasure, study, and various other things may, if abused, lead us away from God; but we cannot on this account refrain from their lawful use, since every creature of God, animate or inanimate, can be misused by man. We must employ these creatures, but with moderation and prudence. The proximate occasions of sin are those things or circumstances which constitute a more or less immediate danger; thus, to witness a play which we know to be immoral, would be the cause of our breaking the sixth commandment.

Of course, the occasions of sin are not the same for all. They vary with a person's age, circumstances and character. As a rule, any thoughtful, pious Child of Mary can see clearly what is likely to be a temptation for her, and will firmly purpose to avoid it. There are some *places* where we have committed sin in the past. Perhaps it was at a concert, or in a ball-room, or at some place where spiritualism was practised. Then there are *people* who, in the past, have led us into sin. Perhaps, Child of Mary, you have a weak will: you cannot bear to differ from those with whom you are in company. Then, in spite of your want of will to do wrong, you have, when with certain persons, committed some sins against purity, truth, or charity. You had not the moral courage to show your displeasure. Such persons are dangerous for

you, and you must carefully avoid them. The same result may also follow when we are inordinately attached to our friends, of either sex, and would do anything to give them pleasure.

Some people are led into sin by reading novels. The habit grows upon them until it becomes a passion. Time is wasted and duties are neglected whenever an interesting book is at hand. Love of dress has led, and is leading, many a girl into sin. If you have ever exceeded your means to satisfy your vanity, despised those less well dressed than yourself, or made dress the chief subject of your thoughts and conversation, then be sure that *fine clothes* are for you an occasion of sin. They nourish your pride and vanity, and lead you to put the world before God.

Are you naturally selfish? If so, you will be tempted to consider only your convenience, always to put your interests first, and to be unjust to your neighbours. Your selfishness will be a constant source of sins, and this is a fault which, like any other besetting sin, grows upon us rapidly as we advance in age, if we are not in earnest about correcting it.

The young are exposed to certain temptations from which older people are free. Each period of life has its own difficulties to face. Thus, excessive love of pleasure may die out as a woman finds herself at the head of a family, whereas bad temper is apt to increase as she grows older and has the cares of a house on her shoulders. The devil is extremely clever, and chooses his snares and temptations with due attention to a person's age and character. If we are wise we shall study our

enemy's tactics, that we may be able to outwit him. In the book of past experience we can learn many a lesson, and in the light of God's teaching we see how to shape our future conduct, for a danger foreseen is half avoided ; while, if we despise it, we shall find it all the sooner at our heels. Self-deception is the most deadly of all perils, and it is precisely the danger into which the young so often run. They see the occasions of sin : they wish to satisfy their desires, while, at the same time, they know that this will offend God. How are they to reconcile these two opposites, satisfy a sinful desire, and please God? These are diametrically opposed, so the devil comes to help them out of the difficulty by deadening the voice of conscience. He suggests a compromise, which the soul grasps eagerly, and this explains the plausible excuses which are so often put forth by those who desire to accomplish what is an impossibility, namely—to serve God and Mammon. Suppose we examine some of these fallacious pretexts in order to instruct those earnest Children of Mary who really desire to serve God, but are constantly deceived by the devil's stratagems.

"*I can take care of myself; I know where to stop.*" Are you sure of this? Look back on your past experience. Does it justify this proud boast? How often, while *meaning* to take care of yourself, have you proved unequal to the work? Holy Scripture warns us, "go not into the way of ruin," and again, "he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed, lest he fall" (1 Cor. x.). You have given way deliberately to presumption, and we know that "pride goeth before destruction, and

the spirit is lifted up before a fall." It is not safe to swallow poison, counting that your good intentions will act as an emetic or antidote. Some of the evil will surely lurk in the soul, and gradually deaden your sense of right and wrong, and if you continue to rush into the occasions of sin, you are certain to fall. It is only a question of time. Nay, the very act of exposing yourself to the danger without any necessity is a sin of presumption. Wise people are taught by experience; it is only the foolish and headstrong, who, as it was said of the Bourbons, can never learn or unlearn anything. There is in a certain street in Venice a beautiful statuette of the Blessed Virgin, before which, day and night, two lamps are kept burning. Long, long ago, when the Queen of the Adriatic was a republic, a young baker was arrested for the crime of murder. The circumstantial evidence against him was overwhelming, and he was pronounced guilty, and hanged. Not long after his death the real criminal was discovered, and a revulsion of feeling set in. But it was too late: the senate could only order that every time the court passed sentence of death, a herald should enter and cry, "Remember the baker!" Then a new trial was begun, with a new sifting of the evidence; and many a poor fellow was thus spared an unjust sentence.

The little statue was placed in commemoration of the sorrow of those who made so grave and sad a mistake; and, although the republic is but a memory, and the accused and accusers have lain in the dust for centuries, it is still a silent warning against hasty judgments. Do you often judge

your neighbour harshly? Have you not frequently found yourself in the wrong? Then, when tempted to commit this fault again, consult past experience, "Remember the baker."

"*Others do it, why cannot I?*" You might as well argue, "Others go to hell, why cannot I?" You reason differently when it is a question of temporal concerns. We do not hear of people who are contented with low wages for very hard work, and who refuse to better themselves just because some people have to submit to these trying conditions. Salvation is a personal affair, which each must work out in fear and trembling for himself. So, whatever others do, do not neglect your eternal interest. You cannot afford to risk losing your soul by courting danger. When a ship goes down, is it a consolation for a drowning man to know that twenty companions perish with him? Does it not rather add to his agony, especially if some are his own kith and kin? True, some girls could go into a certain occasion of sin which would be perilous for you, just as asbestos can be cast into the fire with impunity, while straw would be consumed; but this does not justify your running the risk. The moment there is a real danger for your immortal soul you must not face the peril. Perhaps you have already sinned on like occasions, or you have seen others fall, so be warned in time.

"*I do not like to make myself conspicuous.*" What a modest sentiment this appears. Let us investigate its real value, and, to make the lesson clearer, we will take an example. You have an invitation to dine out on a Friday with some wealthy Protestant

friends. You want to go; besides, you do not wish to offend them; they move in good society, and it is your interest to cultivate their intimacy. But what about the abstinence? To justify your intended disobedience to the laws of the Church, you try to quieten conscience by saying, "I do not like to make myself conspicuous." Then, evidently since you are so modest, and dislike so much to attract attention, you will not spend several hours dressing for this dinner, you will not choose just those dresses and ornaments which become you most, you will be perfectly indifferent as to your personal appearance. At the table you will not strive to attract attention in any way by fishing for compliments and indulging in coquetry; you will be pleased if little or no attention is paid to you. Now, as a matter of fact, we know that when people are anxious to cultivate the friendship of the wealthy, they just do the very opposite, commit many faults of vanity, and are generally full of self-consciousness. This proves that their willingness to dispense themselves from the law of abstinence does not proceed from modesty, but rather from a desire to satisfy their love of pleasure and of the world. In face of an invitation of this sort, a true Child of Mary will either decline or tell her friends very simply that Friday is an abstinence day, and ask them not to feel offended if she abstains from meat at their table. They will honour her for her candour, and would perhaps be the first to criticise her conduct and to divine her motive if she consented to disobey the laws of the Church in order to please them.

"*Am I always to be in leading strings?*" Here

the cloven hoof of the demon of pride shows itself. What do you understand by *leading strings*, my child? "I mean, of course, anything that hampers my liberty." Excuse one more question, but what do you understand by liberty? It is well to have a clear idea of the meaning of words. "By liberty I mean the right to go where I like and to do as I please." These are candid answers which reveal that you do not understand what is meant either by *leading strings* or *liberty*, so we will explain their signification.

When a little child is learning to walk, the mother ties a ribbon round its arm or its waist. She holds the other end of this ribbon, in order to prevent her child from falling. A blind man, led by his dog, is preserved from danger by following the string which guides his steps in the right path; so a leading string is employed as a preservative from danger, and not to hinder a person from taking necessary exercise. So much for the meaning of the first word. Now, as for liberty, this means the right to do what we please, provided it be not against the will of God or injurious to our neighbour. To go beyond this would be not liberty, but license. You have hitherto imagined that a leading string and liberty were synonyms for a chain and license, which is false. God's commandments and the voice of conscience are like leading strings which restrain us from running into danger and deprive us of using our free will to our own ruin or our neighbour's detriment. God, in His mercy, holds back the devil when the evil one would ravish your most precious treasure, the purity of your soul; and you, in your folly, com-

plain of being restricted in your pleasures. He keeps you back by the leading strings of His commandments, which you long to snap.

Have you heard how the last wolf was destroyed in Scotland in the year 1680? It will teach you a useful lesson. A man, named Polson, accompanied by his son, and another young lad, succeeded in finding the den of a she-wolf among the wild recesses of Glen Loth. The den consisted of an underground chamber, accessible only by a narrow fissure among the rocks. The she-wolf being absent, the two lads entered the cave, in which they found five or six cubs. These they began to destroy, while Polson remained outside on the watch. He was scarcely vigilant enough, for the she-wolf returning, succeeded in dashing past him, and had gained the entrance of the den before he could stop her. With a sudden grasp he caught her by the tail, and while she strained frantically to get to her cubs, he tugged her back with all his strength, neither wolf nor hunter gaining any advantage. The struggle went on for some time in perfect silence. The youths within were quite unaware that anything remarkable was taking place, or that danger was near at hand, and Polson heard them grumbling that he was obstructing the light. At length the son called out fretfully, "What is keeping the light from us?" "*If the tail breaks*," said Polson, "*you will soon know that*." Meanwhile he had drawn his dirk, and was using it upon the beast's body in such a fashion that he was soon able to draw her out and finish her upon the ground.

Like the youths in the cave, you are apt to com-

plain of those who are keeping danger from you, and you from danger. Be warned; and when it seems that your liberty is curtailed, do not complain and ask who dares to deprive you of it. "*If the tail breaks you will soon know.*" Had the boys left the cubs to go and clear the entrance, the father would certainly have held back the wolf in vain. So if you, my child, will rush into the jaws of evil, in vain do your parents and, above all, your heavenly Father, try to keep off the infernal wolf. And, just as the Alpine climbers need a guide and a stout rope to climb the dizzy heights, so if you would not fall into the precipice of sin, you need a guiding hand and the leading string of obedience.

"*I must have some pleasure.*" Quite true: you must have some *real* pleasure. Do not be satisfied with the world's counterfeit imitations, since God created you for eternal happiness. The world offers its worthless brands of pleasure: but bitterness is at the bottom; whereas, in real pleasures, there is no bitter after-taste. You know that when you take a forbidden pleasure, you suffer *before, during*, and *after* it; you are anxious before for fear your plans should fail to secure the forbidden fruit; when it is in your grasp, conscience makes you uneasy; and after, you dread the truth being discovered. Is it worth sinning for so little? Do your duty bravely and you will enjoy a quiet conscience, which is the greatest happiness in the world. Have the courage to say "No" when the temptation comes to seek some forbidden pleasure at the expense of duty. Give our Blessed Lord the pleasure of witnessing your fidelity.

Remember, too, that this occasion of sin nearly always entails the sin of others. Men sin in flocks, so to say, and each one adds to the total sum of sins. It is not cowardice to fly from an occasion of sin which will do harm to your own soul and also to the souls of your companions. In one of the wars in Ireland during the reign of George III., some of the king's troops did not fight particularly well, and a certain general especially had lacked courage. When the war was over and all went gaily as a marriage-bell, the Lord Lieutenant gave a very grand party in the Phœnix Park. All the nobility were there, but, of course, none of the poor people. Notwithstanding, a beggar woman forced her way into the circle, asking for charity, when General J—— reproved her for her importunity. To his admonitions she replied: "It's I that am proud to see your honour there in the red coat you wore the very day when you saved the life of my boy, little Mickie!" "Indeed," remarked the general, not sorry to hear anything to his credit on such a distinguished occasion, "I had forgotten all about it. How did I save his life?" "Well, your honour, when the battle was at the hottest, your honour was the first to run; and when my little Mickie saw the general run, he ran too; and only for that he'd have been killed. And many an honest boy was killed there that day, the Lord be praised!"

The general's discomfiture can better be imagined than described, and, of course, his cowardice is not held up for your imitation. Nevertheless, you may learn a useful lesson from it, namely, that when you *wisely* run away from an occasion of sin,

you may be the means of saving many a Mickie; whereas, if you are foolhardy enough to brave danger unnecessarily, you and your companions "shall perish therein."

"*It does not do to be too particular.*" Have you any valuable jewels, my child? Do you throw them about carelessly, or run the risk of having them stolen, saying: "It does not do to be too particular?" If you knew that a house had been infected with smallpox, you would not dream of inhabiting it until it had been thoroughly disinfected. You would probably prefer choosing some other dwelling were it in your power. When it is a question of wealth or health, we are particular; surely we cannot be too careful of our immortal soul, so as not to risk losing the precious jewel of sanctifying grace which is the very health of the soul. How a man clings to life: all is staked for it. A Bucharest merchant was one of forty-six passengers who lost their lives in a terrible train collision in Roumania in 1901. Sixteen petroleum reservoirs were carried by a goods train which, being overloaded, slid with great velocity down an incline, and rushed into a passenger train. The reservoirs caught fire, and awful scenes ensued. The whole wreckage was soon ablaze, many of the passengers being burnt alive. One of these unfortunate individuals was Herr Dinu. He could have escaped but for the fact that one leg was gripped by the wreckage. The flames were gradually approaching him, and he made frantic efforts to extricate the captured limb. In utter despair, the millionaire offered to share his fortune with anyone who would release him from his perilous

position by chopping off his leg. The tempting offer of half a million was made in vain, and the millionaire, with many of his poorer fellow passengers, perished in the fire.

Those who are on the threshold of eternity realise the impotence of gold to save them. Yet, what is the life of the body compared to the supernatural life of the soul, without which no man can be saved? Herr Dinu did not hesitate for one second to offer his fortune when he found himself powerless to move and felt the scorching flames approaching nearer and nearer, and you feel that he acted reasonably. Are you convinced, now, that you cannot be too particular? Lady Burton gives us a noble example and teaches us how particular we ought to be lest we ruin our immortal soul, which is made in the image of God, or endanger the souls of our neighbours. She was the widow of Sir Richard Burton, the celebrated author. After his death, being in want of money, she thought of selling the MS. of her husband's last translation. A publisher offered her the tempting sum of six thousand guineas. Lady Burton knew *the work to be grossly immoral;* yet it had a scientific value, and had cost her beloved husband years of labour. We will let her tell in her own words how she feared to give scandal:

"I said to myself, out of fifteen hundred men, fifteen will probably read this in the spirit in which it is written; the other fourteen hundred and eighty-five will read it for filth's sake, and pass it on to their friends, and the harm done may be incalculable. . . . I sat down before the fire after dark to consult my own heart, my own head.

How I wanted a mother! My head told me that sin is the only rolling stone that gathers moss. . . I laid the MS. on the ground before me—two large volumes. Still my thoughts were, Was it a sacrilege? It was his *magnum opus*—his last work that he was so proud of: that he was to have finished on the awful morrow—that never came Will he rise up in the grave and curse me, or bless me? I knew that the authors, who were pagans, prayed that they might not to be cast into hell fire for having written the original. And then I said: 'Not only not for six thousand guineas, but not for six million guineas will I risk it.' Sorrowfully, reverently, and in fear and trembling, I burnt sheet after sheet until the whole was consumed." There are worldly-wise people who would say that Lady Burton did a foolish thing; but all true Christians and Children of Mary will esteem it a noble act worthy of being recorded in letters of gold.

We have refuted some of the alleged reasons which so many put forward to justify their conduct in running into the occasions of sin. Do you see more clearly, my child, what a dangerous experiment it is? At least, you cannot now rush into them without perceiving your danger unless you wilfully determine not to see; but a girl of this class would hardly take up a book which is written principally for Mary's Children. Self-deception is the most deadly of dangers, and, if you are convinced of this truth, it is a step towards correcting the defect. But there are some occasions of sin which we cannot avoid: our calling or circumstances place us in them. How are we to keep from sin, then? This is an important question which we

will answer by a comparison. Suppose you have at your place of business to pass frequently through a courtyard in which there is a fierce bull-dog. What are you to do? Evidently, if you cannot defend yourself, you must get the manager to chain up and muzzle the dog; then you can pass safely. He would not refuse to do this, and thus expose his workers to be attacked by a bull-dog.

In like manner, if duty obliges you to go into the midst of sinful company, where you hear or see what is dangerous for your faith or morals, ask our heavenly Father to prevent these bad examples from leading you into sin. You must "muzzle the dog" by *prayer* and *vigilance*, "lest you enter into temptation." God will be with you to guard you from danger, as He kept Daniel in the lions' den; but He has promised no such succour to those who wantonly expose themselves to commit sin by their thoughtlessness and imprudence.

In conclusion, we will sum up this instruction in a few simple rules, which all Christians should follow, as regards the dangerous occasions of sin:—

1. Never deliberately entertain the thought of doing what is wrong; shrink from such a proposition as you would from a serpent's sting. Do not allow yourself to be deceived by specious pretexts, and do not *deceive yourself.*

2. Meditate on the evils that sin brings in its train, and pray for a deep hatred of it.

3. Refrain from even *the appearances of evil* for the sake of edification. To avoid giving scandal, give up *even a lawful pleasure.*

4. Try to *foresee* what might tempt you to evil in order to avoid it.

5. If you have yielded, do not be ashamed to repair your fault and to amend.

6. Confess your sin simply and candidly; tell your confessor *all the circumstances.* So many serious falls might be avoided if only penitents were to ask advice *in time.*

7. Be ready to make any sacrifice as regards this world's goods rather than offend God.

8. Be ready to sacrifice your friendship with one to whom you are deeply attached rather than walk along the broad road with that friend. Remember that when your neighbour's house is on fire, your own is in danger.

9. Never lead another into sin. You may repent and save your soul, while the one whom you have scandalised will perhaps rush on in the downward path that leads to perdition.

10. Pray earnestly that God will give you grace to stand firm, and ask Him to guard you from all evil.

SUNSHINE AND CLOUDS.

WHEN, as a little child, you learned your Bible History, do you remember what an impression the account of the ten plagues of Egypt had on you? The vivid pictures helped you to realise most of them, but there was one of which no picture could be drawn. No artist could portray the terrible plague—"When there came horrible darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. No man saw his brother, nor moved himself out of the place where he was" (Exod. x.). Perhaps you tried, by shutting your eyes tightly, to realise what that darkness must have been. We all have our instinctive horror of being alone in the dark; it always seems associated with some unknown peril, and Scripture tells us that it is one of the torments of the lost who, with the fallen angels, are "reserved into darkness in everlasting chains . . . to whom the storm of darkness is reserved for ever." Byron wrote a most powerful poem on Darkness, which brings before us vividly what this world of ours would be without the light of day:

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless and pathless; and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;

Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light."

He goes on to represent the inhabitants as lighting watch-fires; the palaces and huts alike were burned to give light; the forests were fired, but all these sources of artificial light and heat quickly failed. The horrors of the situation increased, until—

"The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump—
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
A lump of death, a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes, and oceans all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths.

. . . . .

The waves were dead, the tides were in their graves:
The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air
And the clouds perished."

This is a fearful picture of a world in darkness, of what our earth would be without the sun, which gives light and heat and renders all nature fruitful.

There is another darkness we dread, and of which night is a type—the darkness of sorrow and mourning. A Christian may be confined in a dungeon where no ray of light can penetrate; but if he have the testimony of a pure conscience, above all, if he be a confessor of the faith, in chains for Christ's sake, he will be borne up by the joy of suffering for his Master. Interior contentment will make his position less intolerable, nay, it may transform his prison into a paradise.

What would the world be without joy? We know there is one joyless realm—God grant that we

may never enter it! Our heavenly Father, in His infinite love and pity, alternates joys and sorrows during our earthly career. If sadness endures for a night, joy comes in the morning, that we may be able to bear up under our trials. God would have us rejoice—it is a precept, not a mere counsel: "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice." "Be not sad, for the joy of the Lord is our strength" (Neh. viii.). It behoves us to be bright and cheerful, to serve God with joy; and those who obey this precept faithfully are a ray of sunshine to all with whom they come in contact.

There are so many sources of joy, so many reasons why we should not "play the wanton with our griefs." Suppose we enumerate a few, so that when you are tempted to indulge in "a fit of the blues," you may be able to recall some of these motives for rejoicing and thus be enabled to rise above the dark clouds of sadness.

We should be joyful because we can, if we will, live in the sunshine of God's presence by keeping our souls pure. Look at that little child sitting by his mother's side. He is playing with his toys; apparently all his attention is concentrated on them. The mother is quietly working, and as long as she sits there the child is happy; but if she goes out of the room, instantly he begins to cry and tries to crawl after her. He is only happy when his mother is near at hand. So, too, the Christian should rejoice in the presence of his heavenly Father, and say in all truth: "Thou shalt fill me with the joy of Thy countenance"; and that joy will never be taken from us except through our wilful sin. Are you sometimes sad, Child of

Mary? Do you frequently give way to fits of despondency? Go and kneel before the Tabernacle and ask our Emmanuel to fill you with the joy of His presence, and then make generous efforts to forget your griefs, or, at least, not to let them be a cause of suffering to your friends.

It is a joy to the just to do judgment—that is, to teach others the way to justice, to lead them into the right path. There are few purer joys on earth than that of doing good and of making others happy. If you have ever prayed earnestly for the conversion of one dear to you, you will remember what joy filled your soul when that person was, by your prayers and efforts, received into the Church. To alleviate the sorrows of others, to brighten their lives, is an abundant source of joy for ourselves. The angels, who rejoice over the repentant sinner give us an example of this disinterested rejoicing.

The joys of those we love are a pure source of happiness for us, which often touch us more deeply than our own. Thus a mother, in her unselfishness, rejoices over any good fortune which befalls her child, more than when she receives a like favour. This is because the mother loves her child better than herself; her love is unselfish. There is no greater kill-joy than inordinate self-love, which keeps us wrapped up in our petty troubles. The man who is a pessimist, like a silkworm, spins a thread which binds him in a silken tomb, and as he spins he impoverishes himself till, in extreme cases, like the worm, he perishes in the prison which he has made for himself. This accounts for many of the suicides of which we read in the newspapers. If, when sorrow falls on us, we can succeed in forget-

ting ourselves and in interesting ourselves in the wants of our neighbour, we shall find our own burden considerably lightened.

"Pray . . . that your joy may be full," is a Divine command. Jesus is ever generous in His gifts. He gives no stinted measure. By prayer we can obtain all that is necessary for our real good, since we can pour forth our sorrows into the ear of our heavenly Father, and implore those graces which He has pledged Himself to give us.

Since joy is a gift of the Holy Ghost, we have a right to it in virtue of our confirmation; so if we pray earnestly we shall receive this precious grace.

St. James tells us: "Count it all joy, when you shall fall into *divers* temptations." "This is a hard saying," you exclaim. It does seem so at first sight, but let us try to fathom the meaning of the Apostle's words. He goes on to explain why he would have us rejoice. It is because the "trying of our faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work" (James i.). We rejoice in temptation only as a means to an end, for how can we acquire virtue if the means are lacking? It is only in proportion as we *exercise* ourselves in patience or charity that we shall become patient or charitable. The same holds good of trials and persecution. They strengthen our faith and give us opportunities of growing in virtue. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." We must look to the end, and this will uphold us in our dark hours. Joy becomes the children of God, for whom the heavenly mansions are reserved; so let us go on our way rejoicing, and never give our Lord the occasion to reproach us with being sad as we "walk

in the way" homeward. If only we could tread on an aerial plain which was raised but a few inches above our earth, how many mud-stains we should be able to avoid. This is not in our power; but we can rise above the mire of sin and imperfection by living in the spirit of joy. If our feet must touch this earth, our thoughts and our conversation, that is, our manner of living, can be supernatural.

We have pointed out the various sources whence joy springs, and indirectly we have seen that sin, selfishness, neglect of prayer, and mistaken ideas as regards temptation and trials, are at the root of sadness. Perhaps, Child of Mary, by this time you have seen what leads you to give way to melancholy. There are other motives than those mentioned above. Sadness may come from bad health, from a naturally melancholy temperament, and when it comes from God is not incompatible with intense joy. A subdued serious humour differs from fretful moping as day differs from night. Does your sadness spring from jealous envy of another, or from wounded pride? Such a sorrow is incompatible with joy, which is a fruit of the Holy Ghost. Scruples, too, always rob their victims of cheerfulness. If your sadness springs from either of the three last-mentioned sources, then the means to overcome it will be either patience, humility, or confidence in God.

A girl who is delicate must sometimes find it hard to be cheerful; but perhaps, as you know from experience, the best remedy in this case is to try to interest yourself in some hobby, for our aches and pains seem to increase in proportion as

we dwell upon them. Take up, when possible, some occupation that will absorb all your attention. If wounded self-love is your enemy, then the only remedy is to practise humility. Smother your wounded feelings, and the fire of passion will soon die out. For that pest, the kill-joy scruple, there are two principal remedies—obedience and confidence in God. If you are in earnest about your sanctification, you will employ those remedies which are most efficacious for your special case, and in this matter ask your confessor's advice and *follow it.* Sometimes the mere unburdening of our mind to a confessor or to a true friend will restore peace and joy to our souls.

As long as we live there will be crosses to bear and causes of sadness, and he who has the greater number has the better chance of perfecting himself in the spirit of joy. As a Chinese proverb puts it, "We cannot prevent the birds of sadness from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from building their nests in our hair." Our life has its sweets and bitters, but, like the bee, we must choose the former rather than settle down to suck the latter. If God sends us the bitter things of life, we shall find in them the hidden manna which is promised to those who do God's will. To be unselfish and share our joys with our friends is a great means of augmenting them, for:

> "He who bends to himself a joy
> Does the winged life destroy;
> But he who kisses the joy as it flies
> Lives in Eternity's sunrise."

In God's beautiful world, in spite of sin, how many pure joys are to be found. There are the joys of

studying nature, of the family circle, of devoting ourselves to our neighbours, of cultivating our intellect. We can possess peace and happiness which pass all understanding, and which are the fruits of faith, as well as the joy of a pure conscience, a good communion or spiritual sweetness.

It is a dangerous path on which we start when we systematically "nurse our griefs." Many of them are only griefs just because they are nursed; if neglected they would soon die a natural death. A morbid and diseased imagination can magnify a molehill till it appears a mountain. Have you never caught yourself exaggerating some trifle until it seemed unbearable? But just then a friend came in, you were obliged to think of something else, and, after the visit, things looked so much brighter.

Once a man agreed to run a race laden with a 40-lb. weight of anything his friend might choose to select. He was not to see his burden until just before the race began. Imagine his consternation when he found that it was composed of a quantity of air balloons, such as are used for children's toys. These balloons, being full of air, were a serious impediment to the race, and made it impossible for him to win his bet.

Here is a Child of Mary who catches herself in a somewhat similar manner. She sets to work to brood upon her real or imaginary little sorrows till their trials swell up and assume gigantic proportions. Bring down the compound sledge-hammer of common sense, reason and faith, on your inflated load, my child, and its size will speedily be reduced. It is dangerous to blot out the joy of life by mag-

nifying our sorrows. There will always be enough real crosses in life without encouraging "Home manufactures." Many pilgrims toil along the narrow road laden with burdens, on some of which might be appropriately inscribed the words: "Supported by voluntary contributions only."

What are the dangers of giving way to sadness? God Himself has answered this question: "Because thou didst not serve the Lord with joy and gladness of heart, thou shalt serve thine enemy, and he shall put an iron yoke upon thy neck" (Deut. xxviii.). From this we see that sinful sadness puts us in the power of our enemy. What an iron yoke the Puritans forged for those who followed their tenets! What a gloomy creed Calvin invented! And in the spiritual life, if we do not walk before God in joy and gladness of heart, then we must necessarily serve a hard taskmaster, and wear an iron yoke. We are told, "The joy of the Lord is your strength," and they who walk sadly on Sion's road must be weak in consequence.

In olden times one of the greatest humiliations the conqueror could inflict on the vanquished was to make them pass under the yoke, and surely it is a disgrace for a Christian and a Child of Mary not merely to pass under but to live under Satan's iron yoke of sadness. When we brood over our sorrow we are in constant danger of sinning; spiritual duties are neglected, our neighbour's claims are unheeded, and, instead of being a power for good, we only help to discourage others.

Has enough been said to convince you of the danger of giving way to "fits of the blues," dignified by the name of attacks of depression? Then

take a generous resolution to stifle them *when they begin*. Do not wait until you have lost your way in the darkness. How are you to do this? By forcing yourself to speak instead of keeping a moody silence: by being active, since work is a powerful antiseptic for the bacteria of gloominess. Try to acquire the habit of looking at the bright side of things. Pray earnestly for grace to conquer yourself, and when you feel tempted to mope go and kneel at our dear Lady's feet and recite slowly and thoughtfully the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary or the "Magnificat." They will bring before your mind some of the motives you have for rejoicing, and remind you that after the combat comes the rest, and that only the victorious will be crowned. Be on the alert to catch the sunshine of life as the rays flash upon your path. A geologist, who was extremely devoted to science, was in the habit of collecting specimens of various rocks as he traversed different districts. When his friends urged him not to burden himself with so many specimens, he used to reply: "I may never pass this way again."

On the narrow way we are sure never to pass over the same ground twice, and this should make us diligent in profiting by the opportunities we have of making our spiritual fortune. Profit by the sunshine, share your joys with others, and live as a child of God. Mary, our Mother, ever rejoiced in God her Saviour. She is the model of all virtues, and joy becomes her children.

ON HOLINESS.

WHEN, of old, God spoke to Moses on the mountain of Sinai, one of the exhortations which was given to him for the people of Israel was, "Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy, because I am the Lord your God" (Levit. xx.). God willed that His chosen people should serve Him in the beauty of holiness and worship Him with purity of soul. Constantly the Jews were reminded of this, and when the High Priest officiated on the Day of Atonement, or offered the sacrifice on the Sabbath days, he wore a white linen mitre, round which was fastened a crown or plate of gold bearing the words "Sanctum Domino," Holy to the Lord. It was a constant reminder to the High Priest himself, and to the worshippers, that those who approached the altar of God must be holy.

When Jesus came on earth, the very first time He spoke in public He taught the same truth. As the disciples heard fall from His sacred lips the solemn words, "Be you perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect" (St. Matt. v.), perhaps they remembered the earlier precept, which must have been familiar to them. The Apostles, inspired by the Holy Ghost, taught the same doctrine: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification," and St. John tells us that the Virgins—that is, the pure of heart—"follow the Lamb whithersoever

He goeth," in that heaven where "nothing defiled can enter."

Hence we see, as we look back on the ages, that God has always willed to be served by holy people. We must be holy; it is a precept binding on all, since none can be saved without at least that degree of holiness which we call a "state of grace." Often we hear people exclaim, "I do not pretend to be a saint; provided I just get into heaven, I shall be perfectly satisfied." The answer to this is that all must be saints to enter heaven, even those who only desire the lowest rank there. If our purification is not perfected here on earth, it must be accomplished in Purgatory. Such sentiments of indifference as regards our truest interests betray an indifference which we do not feel when it is a question of temporal concerns. What man who could acquire an immense fortune would be satisfied with the bare necessaries of life? What private in the ranks would be willing to remain in a lower position if he had a chance of rising in the army? Another reason which leads people to speak in this way, is that they have a false conception of what is meant by holiness. They do not grasp in what it really consists, and, in consequence, it seems to them an ideal incapable of realisation, as something too vague to be sought after.

Let us see what we understand by holiness. Locke used to say that half the differences of opinion which existed might be traced to different meanings being attached to the same word. In order to avoid this pitfall, let us examine this important question. Suppose we begin by the negative side.

Holiness certainly does not consist in an extraordinary career, in what the world would call a record life; for, if so, how could St. John Berchmans, a simple Jesuit novice, find a place among the canonised saints? Nor do visions and revelations constitute the essence of sanctity, since many of the saints of God were not favoured with them. True, some did heroic penances, but others, unable to practise these austerities, were content to follow the beaten path and to accept those mortifications which came direct from God. Young people often imagine that holiness consists in sentimental expressions, overwrought feelings, or extravagant devotional postures. Thus, St Francis of Sales, when a seminarist, observed that one of his companions almost prostrated himself when praying in the chapel. The saint, thinking this attitude betokened great devotion, tried to imitate him, in hopes of experiencing deep feelings of tenderness, but, as he afterwards confessed, he failed signally. Resolutions which are based merely on sentiment instead of on reason will not lead to practical results, since the good purpose vanishes with the feelings of devotion.

Holiness does not consist in the absence of strong passions, as we see in the case of St. Peter, St. Ignatius Loyola, and many others. In fact, most of the saints had strong passions, which they bent in the right direction. Some Children of Mary take resolutions with the intention of putting them in practice *when all goes smoothly*, when this or that difficulty has been removed from their path. They legislate only for the bright days, without realising that what they imagine to be insuperable obstacles

are the rungs of the ladder by means of which they should climb heavenwards. There is no such thing as a smooth path for the Christian, and he who waits till one opens out before him will, as he sits waiting, be overtaken by death, and summoned before his Creator to give an account of a wasted life and neglected opportunities.

But, reader, perhaps your difficulty has not yet been mentioned. Your cry is: "How can I be holy, since I sin so often; surely faults and holiness are incompatible?" You will find your objection answered if you remember that St. Mary Magdalen, St. Peter, and the Penitent Thief are now among the great multitude whom no man can number. All these sinned when here on earth, but they washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb, and now they "walk with Him in white." Perfect contrition can blot out sins, and if only we are in earnest our faults of frailty need be no real obstacle to our sanctification.

"But circumstances surely are sometimes insuperable obstacles," is the argument used by another Child of Mary. If so, then God Himself would be placing us in a path in which we could not serve Him and work out our salvation. Our Heavenly Father cannot act inconsistently or command us to do what is impossible. As we glance over the names of the saints we see that some were placed in positions of extraordinary difficulty, yet they persevered and served God in spite of all. Daniel and his companions practised their religion at the court of a heathen monarch, and, when the majority of the Israelites fell into idolatry, God reserved to Himself some loyal men

who had never bowed the knee to Baal. If we are in the path which Providence has marked out for us, we shall find there all the necessary means of sanctification. We can each say, in perfect assurance:

> "And then, from that bright throne,
> I shall look back and see
> The path I trod; and *that alone*
> Was the right path for me."

But it is time to look at the positive side of holiness. In what does it consist? In the faithful accomplishment of our daily duties, in being generous with God, and, by the help of His grace, conquering ourselves for the love of Him. We may also say that it consists in loving God, since whoever loves God is sure to do His holy will and to advance rapidly in holiness. If we would be holy we must seek holiness where it is to be found, and this will help us to estimate the things of earth from a supernatural standpoint. The saints looked at them as a means to an end. When they contemplated the treasures this world could offer, their constant enquiry was, "What will this profit for eternal life?" and they regulated their conduct according to the relative importance the matter had to the great work of their salvation.

The raw material, out of which we are to weave the garment of personal holiness, is to be found in whatsoever our hand finds to do. An American writer has recently made use of a beautiful similitude to express this truth. A ship in distress signalled to a vessel that hove in sight: "Water, we are dying of thirst." The answer was: "Dip your bucket where you are." This was repeated

several times, as the suffering crew imagined that their signals had not been understood. At last one of the sailors let down a bucket, and drew it up full of fresh water. These men, dying of thirst, were opposite the mouth of the mighty Amazon, and its fresh waters, being lighter than those of the Atlantic, remain on the surface, and are thus carried out for some miles before they completely mingle with the ocean.

Have you a sincere desire to work out your salvation, Child of Mary? Are you in earnest about your sanctification? "*Dip your bucket where you are.*" Do not seek for means elsewhere. In your home circle you must perform those duties which, if done for God, will merit for you an eternal reward. Profit by your neighbour's eccentricities of character or positive defects to acquire the virtues which you most need. Look around and see what good you can do. The secret of holiness is to do God's will, and that holy will is revealed to us not by an angel, but by imperfect creatures like ourselves. What matter, provided they point out the right road? We do not refuse to profit by the information which a sign-post gives us because the board is made of common deal, and not of gold. So, no matter through whom God speaks to our soul, the moment we are sure that it is His voice, our duty is to obey promptly.

The general means of holiness are the same for all Christians. They must keep God's commandments and fulfil their daily duties; but it is nevertheless true that for each there is some special path. Generally it consists in exercising ourselves in the virtue that is most opposed to the weakest

side of our character. A scrupulous soul should cultivate the virtues of obedience and of confidence in God. Another must cultivate a spirit of joy, while a third needs to walk in the valley of humility. Do you know, Child of Mary, what virtue you most need, or do you feel drawn to some special practice of devotion or perfection? Apply yourself to that virtue, follow that attraction and you will be progressing in holiness. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus points out the virtues which give a claim to eternal beatitude. Purity of heart, poverty of spirit, meekness, persecution for Christ's sake, sorrows borne for His love, are so many perfect paths which lead to the land where "everlasting light dwelleth"; but *the best* for us is the one which God points out to us individually.

Why is it so important, if we would sanctify ourselves, to attain the virtue which we most need? Because we have just the *strength of our weakest side*, and no more. Do you see that massive iron chain with which the workmen are hauling up a heavy load? That chain consists of a hundred links. Of these ninety-nine are sound, and can each bear the strain of three tons; but *one link* has a flaw, it can only carry one ton. It snaps, and the load falls. The chain had the strength of its weakest link: what profit was it that the remaining ninety-nine were perfect? The devil will always try to snap the weak link, hence we must be on our guard and strengthen it by all the means at our disposal. To persevere always, to go on in spite of dark days and low spirits, needs courage, but God will help us if we strive energetically and pray earnestly.

Even in worldly affairs no man who is not in earnest will make a glorious record career. For fame men will risk dangers, and even life itself. Thus Turner, the great painter, had himself lashed for hours to the mast of a tempest-tossed vessel, that he might watch the angry waves, and thus the better be able to represent them in his beautiful picture. Santos Dumont tried over and over again before he succeeded in navigating his air-ship round the Eiffel Tower in the space of half-an-hour. These men were in earnest, and they took their measures in consequence. Even a pure fiction of another man's brain will stir up the enthusiasm of a nation. We are told that when Dickens published *Dombey and Son* in America, it was issued in periodical numbers. The interest and excitement the story caused amongst the reading public was immense. There was then no Atlantic cable, and after the reception of the number in which little Paul was hovering between life and death, all America was hanging on his fate. When the steamer arrived bringing the succeeding number, the dock was crowded with people, and the passengers thought that news must have been expected of some great national or international event. It was nothing of the kind, but simply the rush of the reading public to learn the first news of Little Dombey's life or death. How few put themselves out as much when it is a question of their highest interest.

We must be in earnest, because sanctification is our personal work. None can work it out for us. If we wish to become saints, none can hinder us; if we are not in earnest about our salvation the

anxiety of others on our account will avail nothing, for God will not force our free will.

In 1901 a wretched Anarchist murdered the beloved President of the United States. After the sentence of electrocution was passed on the assassin, how many earnest Christians offered fervent prayers for his repentance? The fatal day drew nearer and nearer, but God did not force the culprit's free will. The criminal persevered in the path of iniquity, and almost his last words were, "I am not sorry." God alone knows what passed between that wretched man and his Creator during the few seconds which preceded death, but, as far as man can judge, he died impenitent. Thousands were anxious for his repentance, but their prayers and endeavours could avail nothing, if the man himself was indifferent.

How long will it take us to work out our salvation? As long as we live, and since we know not the term allotted to each, we have here an additional stimulus to press towards the goal. Never can we fold our hands and say that our work is done; and for how many has this great task to be accomplished in the purifying flames of Purgatory?

During the South African War a peculiar incident occurred. A Boer was shot by one of our dead soldiers. This was how it happened. A private had been shot through the heart; as he fell dead, he kept a tight grip on the trigger. A Boer passed by, and was about to seize the dead man's rifle. But when he got hold of the muzzle, and pulled it towards himself, the grip which the dead man had on the trigger, caused

the rifle to go off, and killed the Boer on the spot. Thus it often happens that a passion which we thought to be dead revives, and leads us into mortal sin when we least expect it to attack us. Truly, occasions do not make us weak, but they reveal how strong the passions are, even when we have struggled for years against them. St. Jerome is an example of this, for after seventy years of prayer and penance in the wilderness, he felt within himself the movements of those passions which had tormented him when he was quite a young man. Our life's work is indeed before us, so we must lose no time. Little by little, quickly if possible, slowly if needs be, we shall arrive at our destination, provided we are faithful. The road may be long, and the struggle sharp, but, in spite of all the hardships of the route, we are far happier in the midst of the conflict than wordlings are in following the bent of their sinful appetites.

"Sanctum Domino," Holy to the Lord. Let this be our motto and our aim. God looked down from heaven and He saw one immaculate creature. In her heart and life He read "Sanctum Domino," and Mary was chosen to be the Mother of God. Dare we take up such a motto? Yes, in obedience to our Master's command, "Be ye perfect." As children at the baptismal font you were regenerated, and your soul was made holy to the Lord. Let it now be your aim, Child of Mary, that in every thought, word, and deed, Jesus, your Master, may read the words "Sanctum Domino" till the new name, which only our Father knows, shall be written "on our foreheads, and we shall stand without spot before the throne of God" (Apoc. xiv.).

PURITY OF INTENTION.

WITH what a marvellous instinct God has endowed the animals! The Creator has given them all that is required to adapt themselves to the conditions under which they have to live. The ant stores up its provision of winter grain, the salmon hastens to the ocean, and the birds migrate to other climes in due season. There is no calculation as to the result of their action on the part of these animals; they simply behave in accordance with the instinct which God has given them, and thus each species continues to flourish.

Man has been called "a reasonable animal." He does not, or at least should not, act without reflection. A man who builds a house or stores up winter provisions reflects on the end he proposes, and takes measures calculated to realise his designs. The more definite the end in view, the more keenly he pursues it. Compare two men who are digging. One is a labourer. He turns over the earth that he may prepare it to receive the seed, and, as he digs, his thoughts are perhaps far away. The other man is a miner in Klondike, and when turning over the earth, as the pick-axe loosens it, his eyes are intently fixed on the loose soil. He is thinking of the gold which he hopes to find. There is a wide difference between the work which these

two men are doing. The labourer's toil is purely mechanical. The miner's is not merely manual labour, but there is also the strain of brain tension, which never allows him to forget his one aim—namely, to enrich himself.

We are reasonable beings, and, as such, are *supposed* to act reasonably; but it by no means follows that we always do so. Both personal experience and observation teach us that there are inconsistent people in the world. Further, since we are Christians, we should also be guided by faith, which enlightens our understanding and supplements reason. Now, faith teaches that we come from God. He is our Creator, and it is for His glory that we exist. Hence all our thoughts, words, and deeds should be for Him. Men are but instruments in His hands, and if we obey them our obedience should be given as to God's representatives. The Christian who faithfully fulfils this glorious destiny of serving God, and who sees God's hand in all the events of life, performs his actions with purity of intention.

Let us examine briefly what this means. By purity of intention we understand doing our daily work with the pure motive of pleasing God. Our life is composed of little acts, constantly repeated. In themselves they may be insignificant, but when performed for the love of God they merit for us an eternal reward. At the court of an earthly sovereign strict etiquette is observed. There are, for example in the English court many nominal offices, such as that of cup-bearer or sewer, and these offices are hereditary in certain noble families. The least service is considered great when performed for an

[illegible]'s sovereign. If this be so, how highly does [illegible] our us when He deigns to accept from us not merely a passing service, but a life-long homage. Every duty performed for God is a mark of our love. Provided we act with purity of intention, in His eyes the meanest action has an intrinsic value, which is independent of external appearance. If a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple shall in nowise lose its reward, how much greater will be the recompense of those who have borne the heat and burden of the day? Therefore our intention is good or pure when we purpose to please God in all we do. An action good in itself can be done with a bad intention, as, for example, when a man gives an alms that he may be praised for so doing. Stubbornness, vanity, or disobedience may also be the mainspring of our actions, and such deeds must clearly be evil, at least in their source, hence they cannot please God.

Our motives, too, are often mixed: thus, a girl may do her duty partly to please God and partly to be praised. Or she may begin with a pure intention, and then some secondary impure end may be suggested by self-love or the devil. It was thus that St. Bernard once had a temptation to vain glory when preaching. As soon as he perceived the temptation, he hesitated for a moment, uncertain whether he ought to continue his sermon or cease at once. He decided wisely to continue, and, rejecting the suggestion, said to the devil: "I did not begin for you; I will not leave off for you."

Besides *good*, *bad*, and *mixed* intentions, there

are also what we may call *indifferent* intentions. For example, you eat some grapes simply because you are thirsty. Evidently this is not a praiseworthy action, nor is it blamable. Suppose, however, that, like St. Catherine of Siena, you take these grapes as a special gift of God, and as you taste the fruit you praise God for His goodness in creating it for such a sinful creature, evidently this would make a very simple action meritorious for heaven. Suppose, on the other hand, you ate them out of gluttony, then an action, indifferent in itself, is performed with a bad intention. Therefore, since the meanest action can be ennobled by purity of intention, it is reasonable that, as Christians and Children of Mary, we should always strive to act with a pure intention, though in order to do this it is not necessary always to be thinking of God while we are occupied with our daily work.

We read in the life of St. Ignatius that after his conversion he attended a grammar school in Barcelona. There, at the age of thirty-seven, he might have been seen sitting in the midst of a noisy class of boys, and learning with them the Latin grammar. He humbled himself, convinced that, in order to be a useful instrument for the glory of God, he must acquire knowledge, and if he would become a priest, he must know Latin. As soon, however, as he began to study, his soul was inundated with spiritual consolation. He passed his time in making acts of the love of God, and in practising the *amo, amas* (I love, thou lovest), instead of conjugating it. Weeks and months passed by, and Ignatius made no progress; he was as ignorant of Latin as before. He now

perceived that these consolations were sent by the devil, in order to prevent him from fitting himself for future work. At once he resolved to devote his whole energies to mastering the Latin grammar, and he begged his master to exact from him with severity the prescribed tasks, and to punish him for any neglect in future. No sooner had he taken these energetic measures than all his spiritual consolations and ecstasies ceased, and St. Ignatius pursued his studies in a state of interior desolation, but with a purity of intention that rendered them meritorious in God's sight.

Satan still employs the same stratagem to deceive earnest souls. He persuades them that it is such a beautiful practice to be always thinking of God. Providing the devil succeeds in making us neglect positive duties, he is quite willing to supply spurious consolations. Scrupulous persons, and those who have a false conception of piety, are very liable to experience this temptation. The tree is known by its fruit; feelings of devotion that lead us away from the path of duty cannot come from God. Hence it is not necessary, nor even possible, except by a very special favour of God, to perform our daily work well, and, at the same time, never lose sight of our good intention and the presence of God. Reserve your energies for what is possible, and do not lose all by striving after too much.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga arrived at such a degree of perfection that he never lost sight of the presence of God, and his good intention was thus not only virtual, but actual at every moment. We poor, imperfect creatures can only judge of such a

height of holiness by a comparison. We know that when a heavy sorrow has fallen on us, or when we have experienced some great joy, we go about our daily work with a certain sub-consciousness of our joy or sorrow. Perhaps it was something like this that the saints experienced as regards the presence of God. We must be content to offer our actions to God each morning, and to renew this offering from time to time during the day. Thus a *virtual* good intention runs like a golden thread through each action, so long as we do not retract it by some deliberate sin.

Should you perceive that some defective motive is animating you in the midst of your work, rectify this by renewing your good intention, and then go on calmly with your usual occupations. An example will perhaps make this clearer. You set out one morning to go up to town in order to make some purchases. Evidently you need not continually repeat to yourself, nor have present before your mind, some such refrain as this: "I am going to town to buy something; I am going to buy something." As long as you are taking the proper means to reach your destination, it is clear that you have not changed your purpose. Suppose, now, that in the train you meet a friend. She inquires where you are going, and invites you to defer your visit to London. You get out at an intermediate station, and take dinner with her. By your consent you clearly show that you have changed your mind. If you had refused the invitation, then you would have kept to your original purpose, although it was not vividly present before your mind at every step of the journey.

Why is it necessary to act with purity of intention? Because it is a precept of Holy Writ. "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that you shall receive the reward of inheritance. Serve ye the Lord Christ" (Col. iii.). On the stage of this world the actors have varied parts: some are great and others are small in the world's esteem, but God does not judge by the same standard. He judges as great those actions that are done with the greatest purity of intention. He sees our inmost thoughts, and it is the purity of intention which makes an action really pleasing in His sight. As a loving father accepts gladly the offering of his child, so God, our Father, accepts our little offering, and condescends to take pleasure in it.

Poor, weak, and sinful as we are, it is in our power to please God. He is glorified by our faithfulness. We read in the book of Job of how God pointed out His servant to Satan with what we might call complacence. And the Lord said to Satan: "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a man simple and upright, and fearing God and avoiding evil, and still keeping his innocence?" (Job ii.). God calls special attention to Job's *simplicity* and *uprightness*, which made the holy patriarch act with such purity of intention. God knew His servant well, and He allowed Satan to try him, and in all his trials Job blessed God, and the devil's wiles were defeated.

One great way of showing our gratitude to God

for all His benefits is to live for Him. Daily and hourly we are receiving benefits, both natural and supernatural, from His loving hands. With the Psalmist we should exclaim, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?" and with him we shall feel that the only worthy return we can make is to take the chalice of salvation and to call on the name of the Lord—in other words, "to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

This purity of intention merits for us an exceeding great reward. By it each action becomes meritorious for heaven, according to our Lord's words: "If thy eye be simple thy whole body will be lightsome"—that is, if our actions are done with simplicity and purity of intention, they are actions worthy of the children of light, and will be rewarded hereafter. As we perform our deeds for God we are making our spiritual fortune, and the meanest action helps to augment our treasure in heaven; thus God has made it our interest to serve Him. Purity of intention gives a great dignity to our common daily work. We can sweep a room for God, and, if we do it well, we are meriting for eternity. How many actions we perform in one day. Each of them counts for heaven, if our intention is pure. Even those occupations which please us most, can still be done for God. The pleasure we find in them does not rob us of our merit, but it is not always easy to accomplish each duty with purity of intention. Selfish and worldly motives creep in and spoil many an action which is good in itself. It is perhaps easier to perform a disagreeable duty more purely for God than a pleasant one. So often self steps in and robs us of

our merit, to say nothing of that great thief, the devil. How often, Child of Mary, have you acted from an impure or sinful motive? Some girls go about all they do as if they were acting a part and had an audience to please. If only they would change their intention, and substitute for it a sincere desire to please God, they would soon become saints.

As you pass through London by night, have you seen the illuminated advertisements which so often annoy us by their glare? You rush to Ludgate Hill Station, and arrive in time to see your train steaming off. Just an hour to wait for the next; so you pace up and down and make the best of it. Now a light flashes upon you, an illuminated letter stands out, then another and another, till "Bovril," or some other word is formed. Then the word disappears, to reappear in a few seconds. The intermittent flash wearies you, but it may teach a useful lesson. As the letters stand out clearly in the darkness, so do our thoughts flash out to the eye of our heavenly Father—not a single one escapes Him. Perhaps you are well dressed and good looking, and you *know it*. The thought uppermost in your mind is, "I wish people would admire me." How ashamed you would be if this thought, as it passes through your mind, appeared in illuminated letters on your forehead! Yet God sees it, and this should be a reminder to watch over your thoughts and to act with purity of intention. But some Child of Mary feels uneasy. She asks anxiously, "What about those thoughts which are involuntary, and of which I do feel so ashamed?" What would happen if there were no

electric current behind the letters? "They would not be seen." Well, my child, switch off the *current of your will* from behind the thought, and there is nothing defective to flash forth. God sees your generous resistance to temptation, and this is pleasing in His eyes. It is the will that makes the deed, and many thoughts that are *in* us are not *of* us.

Jesus our Master stands before us as the great Model of purity of intention. In His all-holy soul were three ardent desires: to glorify God, to save souls, and to give us an example of all virtues. He told His disciples, when they pressed Him to eat, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work" (John iv.). And St. Paul applies these prophetic words to our Lord: "Then said I, Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God." With what wondrous complacence God the Father must have gazed on the pure soul of Jesus. What infinite merit each simple action of the Incarnate Word must have had. He is our Model. We, too, can work for God. We, too, have to glorify God; we must, at least, save our own soul, and by so doing we shall inevitably help others; and it is our duty to let our light shine before men, that they may glorify our Father. If only we pray, we shall receive the grace necessary to enable us to follow in the steps of Jesus.

How are we to acquire this purity of intention? The first step is to desire to do all for God; to be firmly determined to serve our heavenly Father by every thought, word, and deed. This will become easy if we cultivate the thought of the presence of God. He is near each one, we live and move in

His immensity, and He dwells in the soul of the Christian who is in a state of grace. At least, we can accustom ourselves to the habit of pausing reverently and placing ourselves in the presence of God before beginning our usual devotions.

Human respect is a stumbling-block for many Children of Mary. It prevents them from living up to their convictions, and urges them to please man rather than God. Each Child of Mary can probably find out, if she will take the trouble, under what circumstances she most lacks purity of intention ; and provided she is in earnest, the remedy will naturally be suggested. One very great help is to live for eternity, and, like St. Stanislas Kostka, to ask frequently before undertaking any work, " What will this profit me for eternity ? " If we regulate our conduct by this principle, we shall live for God, and receive from Him our eternal reward when life's pilgrimage is ended.

FERVENT IN SPIRIT.

WHAT a mighty power for good or evil is in the hands of a person who is thoroughly in earnest in all he undertakes. Suppose, for example, that an energetic man takes up the false principles of Anarchy. He works out his ideas logically: in his opinion, kings and rulers are the enemies of mankind; so he attacks them, and many crowned heads have been victims of their inveterate foes the Anarchists. Notice, too, that these deluded men, in their frenzy, risk their lives intrepidly. Just as a spark can set a mighty forest on fire, so one bad man will inflame many others, for men like cattle, are more easily driven in large numbers than singly.

In the middle ages the Holy Sepulchre had fallen into the hands of the Turks, who desecrated the holy spot and barbarously treated the Christian pilgrims. St. Bernard came forward as the champion of Christianity; he went forth, and preached with such fiery energy that a mighty host of warriors took the cross and set out to fight for God and their faith. Truly, "that man possesses an inaccessible stronghold who is always in earnest with himself and the things around him" (Goethe), and he will do great things for God, his neighbour, and his own glory.

Often we cannot refrain from admiring the earnestness of those from whom we differ. We may pity their ignorance, but we do not despise them ; and we know by experience that the man who is in earnest is no mean foe with whom to contend. The wicked are thorough in their work, the devil is terribly in earnest, and shall we, the children of God and of our Blessed Lady, be lukewarm, and let fall our hands? God forbid! Our Creator wills that we should be fervent.

The word "fervour" comes from the Latin *fervere*—to be hot, to glow—and the etymology of the word throws a strong light on its meaning. To be "in spirit fervent, serving the Lord," means to glow interiorly with the love of God, and to have a real desire that His kingdom on earth may spread. Fire cannot remain inactive : it betrays its existence by a strong tendency to diffuse itself around. In the same way, if we are fervent, our efforts will tend to spread the knowledge of God's Church.

God hates tepidity : if we are neither hot nor cold, He will reject our feeble services, because they can accomplish no real good. In the Apocalypse, God rebukes severely those who have left their first charity, that is, their original fervour. He bids them, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die" (Apoc. iii.). Without fervour, we cannot advance in holiness ; whereas, if we are glowing with the fire of divine charity, our progress will be rapid. As fire consumes, so fervour will destroy our antipathies, or at least enable us to disregard them when they hinder us in the accomplishment of a duty. It

consumes also our venial sins, since the good works which it enables us to perform are so many acts of love, and love obtains for us the pardon of sins, since many sins are forgiven to those who love much.

Fervour edifies our neighbour. Those who come in contact with a fervent Child of Mary cannot but feel the glow of the interior fire of charity and zeal that is burning so brightly there. People who had the privilege of knowing a saint, such as St. Theresa or the Curé d'Ars, used to say it was an incentive to holiness merely to look at such a servant of God. A peasant, who once conversed with St. Francis of Sales, exclaimed: "If the bishop is so good, what must our Lord be like?" Fervour makes us resemble our Master, Who, full of burning love, came to cast fire upon the earth, and willed that that flame should spread till it reached the hearts of all men. Fire gives heat and light, and sends forth both light and dark heat waves. We must not be content, in the spiritual life, to give forth merely the latter. No; our *light* must shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father, Who is in heaven. This, of course, must be done unostentatiously. Provided we do what is right, edification follows necessarily.

The German Emperor, William II., has adopted the habit of riding very swiftly by way of precaution against assassination, as it is extremely difficult to aim at a swift rider so that the bullet makes its mark. In like manner in the spiritual life, if our fervour carries us swiftly forward we shall avoid many a fiery dart of the evil one.

Doubtless, Child of Mary, if the question was

put to you: "Are you fervent?" you would say, "Alas! no—I wish I were." Do not calumniate yourself; if you *really wish to be fervent* you have at least some sparks of fervour, for the first step on the right path is to have a sincere desire to possess this virtue. Without the wish to advance in holiness and to serve God in earnest, we remain rooted to the spot while the grass grows under our feet.

Now let us come to the second step, which consists in having a firm determination to go on in spite of fears, difficulties, and falls. Have you ever accidentally walked into an Irish bog? If so, you know that it is easier to get in than to get out. The feet sink deeper and deeper, and if you have got very far in and it is dark, you may be in real peril of your life. Now, no sane man who has fallen into a bog decides voluntarily to remain in such uncomfortable quarters. Self-preservation is a natural instinct, so he tries hard to retrace his footsteps, and there is no lack of determination on his part. He is in earnest about getting on *terra firma* again. Now apply this to our spiritual life. We often have to pass through a moral bog, and fervour consists then in a resolute will to go ahead and not to settle down and make our dwelling there.

Some homes are a veritable quagmire for the soul; in many the parents, by their evil lives, foster the germs of vice in their children. Yet even in such abodes of sin, there are many "who have not defiled their garments," many whom God has preserved as by a miracle from the sin-tainted atmosphere. When this happens, be sure it is not God's work alone. The soul has fervently co-operated

with the grace given, and thus has been enabled to keep its baptismal innocence.

There are factories and work-rooms where idle and loose conversation, if not worse, is the order of the day. Often young Catholics are placed there by the necessity of earning their daily bread; but if they are fervent, they will pick their way through this moral quagmire and come forth stronger and with a greater love of holy purity. There are homes where the father is an infidel, where religion is a subject of derision. In the midst of such surroundings we may find a child who feels called to consecrate herself to God, that she may obtain her father's conversion; and her faith has been proof against many a specious argument. Thus, God has His chosen souls in all conditions of life.

We may have to pass through the "slough of despond," as Bunyan calls it, where we lose all taste for prayer and the service of God. We feel spiritually dry and indifferent. A certain apathy invades and floods the soul. Can we be fervent when in such a state of mind? Certainly, since fervour consists in a determination to go forward, come what may, and to perform our exercises of devotion as punctually as if we enjoyed them. It is an unequivocal proof of fervour to persevere in our prayers in spite of spiritual dryness.

Fervour leads us to stand up for our faith when it is attacked. In the presence of a fervent Catholic the enemies of the Church do not assail the faith with impunity. Fervour, too, will lead us to study our religion thoroughly, that we may be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

Generosity in rising promptly after a fault is

another sign of fervour, and since falls are inevitable, we must be fervent if we would not rest wounded on the battle-field at the mercy of our implacable foe, the devil. There are also special times of fervour, notably the fasts and feasts of the Church. In Lent, the Church calls on all her children to do penance as an expiation for their sins. A retreat is a time of renovation which kindles our fervour and renews our devotedness in God's service. A death in a family is a call to renewed fervour; or we may be in a great difficulty and need some special grace, which can only be obtained by prayer and fasting, *i.e.*, by acts of mortification. If we are earnest about the salvation of those dear to us, it will make us "in spirit fervent, serving the Lord," in order to obtain graces for them.

What are the chief means which will assist us in becoming fervent? The first has already been pointed out as a proof of fervour, but it is also a means, namely, the desire to acquire this virtue. This is a gift of God, for St. Paul tells us: "It is God Who worketh in you, both *to will* and to accomplish according to His good will" (Phil. ii.). Every holy thought is heaven-born; of ourselves, we can not even *will* what is right.

This earnest desire is strengthened by prayer and meditation. Among those that tread the broad road that leadeth to destruction, we may safely say there are none who meditate seriously and frequently on the truths which our faith puts before us. If the world is so desolate, it is because men do not reflect in their hearts. When the prodigal began to reflect, his conversion followed as a natural

consequence. Prayer supplies the fuel which keeps up the fire of charity, and meditation keeps before our minds those truths which are so powerful in steeling our will. God's light is vouchsafed to those who reflect on the eternal truths. Their convictions are strengthened, and at the same time their fervour is increased. Above all, the sacraments, well received, are the great channels of grace. In Holy Communion Jesus comes to us: His sacred Heart beats within us. He wills to impart as much as we are prepared to receive. In the Psalms, God invites His people to enlarge their desires. Speaking to the house of Israel, He says: "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." The greater our desire, the more graces we receive in Holy Communion. Thus, once more we see that fervour begets fervour.

He who would learn a trade must exercise himself therein; and he who would be fervent in spirit, must do good works. What good works are we to perform? Whatsoever our hand findeth. No service is too trivial for love to accept, no generous deed is too difficult for a fervent soul to attempt. Success does not always crown our efforts—at least, not in the world's opinion; but in God's sight many a so-called failure has been a brilliant success for the next world. Often God bids us undertake some work, not that we may carry it through triumphantly, but that we may exercise the virtues of patience, fortitude, or humility. It needs far more courage to support a reverse than it does to undertake a difficult enterprise; and failure, like death, often brings out the noblest features of a man's character. It may also

reveal defects of which we never suspected the existence. In any case, failure is a splendid test of character. Charles I. was far nobler in his death than in his life, for—

> "He nothing common did, or mean,
> Upon that memorable scene."

We cannot say as much of his life. Look at Francis I. of France. When he led his army at Marignano, he fought bravely among the foremost in the ranks. Later, when Charles V. defeated him at Pavia, and held him prisoner in the gloomy fortress of Alcazar, he by no means shows to advantage. There he gives way to irritability and despondency, and is even ready to abdicate his throne, and finally he compromises the safety and health of his two sons by leaving them as hostages in Spain. Well might he say as he set foot once more on his native soil, "I am *again* a king," for his conduct in adversity had been most unkingly. In his case, failure brought his defects into relief.

Holy Scripture gives us examples of men who were fervent in spirit in what the world calls the dark days of tribulation. Thus the Apostles, when in prison, rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. All the saints were earnest in their service of God, because the fire of charity burnt brightly in their heart. So will it be with us if only we keep close to our Divine Master and learn of Him.

If we would be fervent, we must beware of forming an erroneous opinion concerning this virtue, and be firmly convinced that it consists *in deeds* and not *in sentiments*, however beautiful

and poetical they may be. Some young people err on this point. If they can pray for some time before the Blessed Sacrament, if they are deeply moved by some spiritual lecture, they immediately conclude that they are fervent. This is by no means certain; God often gives spiritual consolation to those who are very imperfect, in order to attach them to His service. Suppose we judge of their states of mind by their fruits. Some examples will make this clearer. You return home after a Communion, full of spiritual sweetness. Breakfast is brought up, and the eggs are half cooked, or the chops are dried up. If you get into a temper over such a trifle, it does not say much for your fervour. Again, you have such a nice spiritual book, and, alone in your room, you are devouring it eagerly. Your sister comes in and asks you to render some service. Closing your book angrily, you go downstairs with a frown. Is this all the fruit you gather from so touching a lecture? Surely, in both these examples the first result of such beautiful sentiments of devotion should have been the fulfilment of trivial duties. As Children of Mary we must not have a forced, exaggerated piety. In this sinful world we need solid fervour, not a base imitation which only tends to puff us up in our own esteem. Beautiful thoughts are good only inasmuch as they lead us to practise virtue.

When the benighted traveller is seeking his way in a lonely part of the country, he is often misled by the ignis fatuus, or what is popularly called "Will-o'-the-Wisp." This is a phosphorescent light that appears in the night flitting over marshy ground. It is caused by certain inflammable gases

which are given off by the decomposition of animal or vegetable substances, especially when they decay under water. Many a wayfarer has been led into danger by this deceptive light, and the ignis fatuus has often been the cause of serious accidents.

We find something analagous in the spiritual life; the ignis fatuus, or foolish fire of mistaken fervour, which is the product of a diseased mind or of ignorance, has led many a soul out of the right path. In our days hysteria is extremely prevalent, people's nerves easily get the upper hand, then the imagination develops abnormally.

Now suppose a young girl has a great deal of imagination, a tendency to hysteria, and is at the same time both affectionate and pious. She will be tempted to indulge in day dreams; hours pass, and she remains buried in vague speculation on the truths of religion. She is not praying, there are no clear definite thoughts in her brain. She is merely sentimentalising, and in this pursuit she finds a kind of mental intoxication, which makes her lose her intellectual balance. It would not be difficult to move her to tears, which, together with her facility for dreaming, may lead her to think herself a saint, or at least extremely fervent. Such a one will easily conjure up visions, revelations, and extraordinary cases of conscience. She will despise the ordinary duties of daily life and prefers to aim at heroism. She lives in an unreal world. St. Theresa's works on the unitive way are more to her taste than the "Imitation of Christ." Her motto is, "Any path except the common beaten track." Pride thrives in such a soil, and you see at once this fancied fervour is the Will-o'-the-Wisp of illusion. This

girl, if she would be really fervent, must learn to be unaffected, to obey her confessor and superiors, and devote herself to active work. Not infrequently candidates of this description seek admission to some religious house. If they do obtain admittance it is certain that they will only persevere on condition that they correct themselves and learn to control their over-heated imagination.

A very pronounced type has been here portrayed, but there are many minor modifications to be found. The great evil which lies at the root of such characters is inordinate attention given to feelings as exponents of religious fervour, together with self-consciousness and intense self-conceit.

Time flies, so let us work generously for God; come what may, we must press on, and if we have entered the arena late in life and squandered some of our best years in the service of the world, then we have all the greater reason to be fervent, that we may, by our love, redeem the past, and receive our reward when the Master of the Vineyard shall call the labourers to give them their hire.

ON PIETY.

WE may take it for granted that all true Children of Mary are what the world calls pious. They made a profession of piety by the very fact that they sought admission into the Sodality of our Blessed Lady, and promised to observe the rules which bind them to certain practices of devotion, such as attending the meetings of the congregation and being faithful to the monthly Confession and Communion. A thoroughly worldly girl, a butterfly of society, does not seek to be a Child of Mary. She herself would say, "I do not profess to be religious." The very idea of being thought pious would be regarded almost as an insult by such a one. Evidently our worldly friend has a false idea of this beautiful virtue, and there are some practical Christians who labour under a similar delusion. Let us examine in what piety consists.

Piety is a gift of the Holy Ghost which makes us love God with a filial love. It enables us to look on God as our Father, and instils into us the true spirit of prayer. If we are pious, we shall love to commune with our Creator, and to pour out our soul in prayer before the Tabernacle, where our Emmanuel resides. The attitude of a pious Christian is expressed in the words of the prophet,

"Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting." This precious gift of piety, like all other virtues, must show itself in our lives.

What are the fruits of piety? The principal are:—(1) Love of prayer; (2) Confidence in God; (3) Charity; (4) Respect for God's house; (5) Modesty in dress; (6) Control of the tongue. We will consider each of these precious fruits briefly.

Piety instils into our soul a love of prayer. This is perfectly natural, since a loving child always desires to be with its parents and to speak to them. It makes us find a real pleasure in conversing with God, in attending the services of the Church, in hearing the Word of God, and frequenting the Sacraments. If we have piety it will be our joy to go into the house of God, and we shall be faithful also to the *week-day* benedictions. Our Children of Mary ought to set the example on this point, for in so many of our parishes we hear the priest complain of the few who attend the week-day services. In some churches the scattered worshippers are seen dotted over the church like oases in a wide desert. This negligence shows a lack of piety and fervour on the part of the absentees. Granted that some are prevented from attending by their occupations, nevertheless, more could be present if only they had a good will. If all Mary's Children made a firm resolution to attend the week-day benedictions, we should speedily see a great improvement in the attendance at the week-day services.

Then, too, piety affects our daily devotions. It makes us exact in saying our prayers. If we are pious our thoughts will turn instinctively to God

from time to time; at least we shall not pass the whole day without raising our heart to Him, and if any contrariety arises, piety will enable us to look through the human instrument and to see the hand of God working beneath and providing us with a means of sanctification.

Confidence in God is another fruit of piety. The true Christian can say with Job: "Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him" (Job xiii.). There are moments when all seems dark, when we see no issue in our difficulties, but our piety should sustain us, and make us feel certain that a loving Father has pre-ordained or permitted these trials to overwhelm us for a time, and hence we are enabled to go on bravely through the dark days of sorrow and bereavement. Our blind confidence in God will lead us safely through "the time of clouds," far more surely than mere short-sighted human prudence, just as in a dense London fog, the *blind* are the best guides, for they are accustomed to find their way in the dark. A loving child never distrusts its father, no matter how much appearances seem to justify suspicion; in like manner a true child of God trusts His heavenly Father without heeding the evil suggestions to despondency and murmuring, that the devil puts forward in order to lead us astray.

Piety and charity are linked together, and when, in Confirmation, the Holy Spirit pours His sevenfold gifts into our soul, the love of God grows stronger within us. St. Paul, speaking to the Romans, says: "Whosoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear;

but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba (Father). For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (Rom. viii.). Again, we read in the epistle to the Galatians: "Because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father." This filial love of God is a fruit of charity, while it also develops charity in the soul.

Piety gives us a great respect for the House of God. It makes us treat with reverence all that appertains to the service of God. A Child of Mary, therefore, will shew her piety by reverent behaviour in church. There must be no unnecessary conversation in His temple, no idle gazing about, no lounging postures. Then, too, piety will lead us to reverence the Sacraments and the sacred words of Scripture. It will effectually prevent foolish jokes or puns on sacred things, for such levity destroys the very essence of piety. No silly nicknames must be given to the ministers of the altar. We should have a deep reverence for their sacred office, and this will effectually banish from our conduct anything that savours of flippancy, giddiness, or pertness in our intercourse with them. We should also respect the reputation of God's ministers, and never retail scandal about them. It is bad enough to speak uncharitably of our neighbour at any time, but it is a far greater sin when a priest is in question on account of the injury that is done to religion. The same holds good of monks and nuns within certain limits. If you are a true Child of Mary, you will never listen to, or at least never join in, those silly

conversations about the merits of this or that priest. Some hysterical girls have half a dozen directors to whom they go for *advice*, which they carefully avoid putting into practice. Such girls would speedily be cured of their mania if only they knew that priests regard such silly conduct as a certificate of empty-headedness and hysteria. True piety will effectually stop all these silly exhibitions of self-conceit and irreverence.

The pious girl will dress quietly and avoid extravagant attire, in accordance with St. Paul's teaching: "In like manner women also in decent apparel: adorning themselves with modesty and sobriety; not with plaited hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly attire, but as it becometh women professing godliness with good works" (1 Tim. ii.). Here we see that the Apostle condemns extravagance in apparel as being contrary to godliness or piety. This does not prevent a Child of Mary dressing according to her station in life, but it prevents her conforming to indecorous or immodest fashions. A costume that would not be out of place in a carriage or at an evening party, is not becoming at the altar of God. A girl's dress when at church should not be a cause of distractions either *to herself* or *to her neighbours*, and this it is sure to be if she displays undue elegance, or what the world stigmatises as "a loud style." St. Francis of Sales once gave a lesson in his own gentle way to St. Frances of Chantal. One day at dinner, when the Bishop had his usual place next to her as mistress of the house, he observed that her dress was more fashionably made than usual. Taking an opportunity when he could not be overheard, the Bishop said to her in a low

voice: "Madame, should you like to marry again?" "No, indeed, my Lord!" she instantly replied. "Then you should pull down your flag," he said, smiling, but in such a way that she could not take offence. Madame De Chantal perfectly understood him, and when she took her place at dinner the next day, her dress was docked of certain little trimmings and coxcombries which had given it the appearance of smartness.

It does not befit a Christian to bestow too much pains on personal adornment; still less is it becoming for a girl to hoist the flag in church. *Church parade* is certainly not an apostolic or Christian usage; "for pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation and *to keep one's self unspotted from the world*" (James i.). Yes, we must keep our souls "unspotted," and this is impossible if we steep them in the vanities of the world. Piety is a great safeguard in this respect; it prevents us from exceeding the proper limits, enables us to determine them in our own particular case, and, if we are forced by our parents or our position in life to follow the extremes of fashion, it prevents our attaching undue importance to the subject. It is not our treasure, hence our heart is not in it, and this is the antidote to the poison.

Piety teaches us to control our tongue according to St. James's words: "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Our ancestors took this text very literally, and as a punishment for evil tongues, they invented a kind

of penitential instrument called "the scold's bridle." It was something like a knight's head-gear, and completely covered the wearer's head, and in some of the bridles we find a sharp point which pricked the tongue of the speaker; in others, an iron gag made speech impossible. This method of punishment was employed particularly for scolding wives, but might also be used for anyone who had seriously wronged his neighbour by evil words. Perhaps you have seen a "scold's bridle" in some of our museums. These instruments of torture, invented by man, could only check the "unruly member" for a time; there is a better bridle which will not only prevent the outward expression, but will completely uproot the evil. This remedy is piety, which will enable us to refrain from expressing all we feel. One of the reasons which so many godless people put forward to justify their irreligion is the inconsistent lives of those who make a profession of religion. Naturally, the world judges Christians by their words and deeds.

Now, one point on which we are most inconsistent is the control of our tongues. So many good works have been ruined by it, so much evil is wrought in every parish through gossiping—and devout women seem to be the chief culprits. All Children of Mary should show their piety by making a stand against idle, uncharitable gossip; they must learn to bridle their tongues lest they scandalise a neighbour and bring religion into discredit. A word often has such a mighty power for good or evil. If a person makes a profession of piety, while at the same time he gives way to

lying and calumniating, his religion is certainly vain: we have it on St. James's authority.

Not only must we control our tongue when it is a question of evil words, but we must be discreet. Discretion forbids us to reveal what may compromise our neighbour, even though there be no actual sin in mentioning the matter. So much mischief is done by thoughtlessness that every true Child of Mary should be prudent in her words. This is a lesson we should ask our Immaculate Mother to teach us, for she knew what to keep in her own soul, and what to reveal for God's glory. We must learn to be tactful, to say the right thing at the right time. It is said that at the outset of his married life, Mr. Gladstone, forecasting his probable career, gave his wife the choice of two alternatives—to know nothing and be free from all responsibility, or to know everything and be bound to secrecy. Mrs. Gladstone naturally chose the latter; and fifty years afterwards Mr. Gladstone boasted to a friend, "My wife has known every political secret I have ever had, and has never betrayed my confidence." In connection with this subject a pretty story is told. In one of Mr. Gladstone's early cabinet days he was at dinner with his wife and a few prominent colleagues. The conversation turned on some Cabinet secret, when Mrs. Gladstone, on the spur of the moment dropped a remark which clearly showed that she had the entire confidence of her husband. Mr. Gladstone at once flashed on her one of those awful looks of his. She was in great distress—left the table, and penned a note asking forgiveness. Instantly came back the reply, by a servant:

"Dearest C——, don't blame yourself—I don't blame you. It is the only little mistake you ever made.—Your affectionate, W. E. G." Mrs. Gladstone gives us an example of discretion under difficult circumstances, and her one error even is an encouragement to us, for it shows that she had to learn to control her tongue.

In Russia, during the reign of the late Tsar, the editor of a magazine, in which a libel on his Majesty appeared, was put up on a scaffold in public, and forced literally to eat his words. A surgeon stood by and administered the pages in doses, just stopping short at the quantity that would choke the man. How many people would be quite choked if obliged to eat all their imprudent words? Control of the tongue is more easily learned in girlhood than later, for the confirmed chatterer rarely mends her ways. It is not an easy art to learn, but the constant filial thought of God ever-present, together with generous and persevering efforts, will enable us to acquire this virtue. The happiness its possession will procure, both to ourselves and to our neighbours, will amply reward us for our pains: for a discreet woman is a treasure in a household—she helps to make the home an earthly paradise, and her friends bless her memory.

But the advantages of piety are by no means restricted to this earth. Like all virtues, it merits an eternal reward, for "Godliness is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv.). We have seen how it softens the sorrows of life by giving us a love of prayer, a firm confidence in God, and also that it helps us to practise the virtues of

religion, modesty, charity, and self-control. What recompense may we expect when we enter on that life "which is to come?" Jesus, our Master, gives us the answer, when, in His Sermon on the Mount, He says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill." This soul-hunger for God, or fervent piety, makes us long to penetrate more deeply into the mysteries of our faith, and to have a more intimate knowledge of our dear Lord. God alone can give this earnest desire, as He alone can satisfy it. Those who hunger and thirst thus shall be filled; they shall be satiated with spiritual joys when they see God face to face, and throughout eternity His perfections will constitute their beatitude. Meanwhile we must be prepared to struggle on, prepared for difficulties, since "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii.).

Our Lord does not conceal unpleasant truths from us; He tells us what we may expect. You will have special trials, just because you are striving to be a faithful disciple of Jesus, and a true Child of Mary. The devil, the world, and the flesh will strive to rob you of your piety, or at least to diminish it. Satan will lay snares to entangle your feet; he will whisper false maxims into your ear. Worldly friends and acquaintances may mock at your professions of piety, which they will treat as hypocrisy. You will perhaps find it harder to get on in your business or profession, just because you are a Catholic. The flesh, siding with the devil and the world, will tempt you to allow yourself certain unlawful pleasures. Often it will be a real sacrifice to give up some satisfaction

which worldlings recklessly allow themselves. It is not easy to meet these three foes bravely, but with God's help, you can triumph over them, and your piety will be a most useful weapon with which you can gain many a victory.

Be careful, however, to form a true conception of piety, do not be deceived by the counterfeit articles which the devil puts forth as genuine. Sentimental piety, which is characterised by dreaminess or overwrought feelings has been discussed at length in the chapter on "Fervour."

Another form of counterfeit piety is scrupulosity which consists in an aberration of judgment, and a certain rigidity as regards our religious practices that is foreign to the spirit of the Gospel. Disobedience and stubborness generally underlie this so-called piety. A weak intellect will sometimes produce the same results, but in this case the scrupulous person is more to be pitied than blamed.

True piety will bear the fruits which have been enumerated above, and must be cultivated if we would have it flourish in our soul. How is this to be done? By being faithful to our religious practices of obligation and of devotion, as far as we can, and by ignoring feelings when they would hinder us from accomplishing a duty. We may be very dry spiritually, and *feel* little or no fervour, but we can always have the *latent heat* of solid piety, which consists in a filial love of God and a firm determination to serve Him at any cost.

ON SUFFERING.

SUFFERING is one of the greatest mysteries. It exists everywhere. No country is free from it, no living creature can defy its power. Suffering attacks man's natural life. Think of the numerous diseases that prey upon the human body, which furnish such an immense hunting ground for insatiable pain. How much mental agony man endures. He suffers in his affections by bereavements and treachery, in his honour by calumny and detraction. Nor is his spiritual life free from sorrow. He is tried by temptations, doubts, and fears. Truly, "Man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upwards."

As we look out on our sorrow-stricken world and think over the many woes which fall to the lot of humanity, it is very hard to realise that there was a time when suffering did not exist. Between the creation of the angels and the creation of man, suffering sprang into existence; sin gave it birth, and as long as sin exists, so long must sinful creatures suffer. Man came forth pure from the hands of God, and was placed in an earthly paradise, where sin and sorrow had never entered. Our first parents sinned, and instantly suffering invaded this fair world of ours; not even the animals are exempted from it, for St. Paul says,

"We know that every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain even till now, and not only it, but ourselves." Perhaps, reader, though still in your teens, you have endured keen anguish of soul or intense bodily pain. Wealth cannot buy off suffering, which generally intensifies with age. As we have suffered in the past, so anguish of some kind awaits us in the future. All this looks so gloomy, and were there no brighter side to the question our lot would indeed be hard.

Thank God there is a silver lining to the cloud of sorrow, so let us briefly consider together some of the advantages of suffering, that we may be the better prepared to profit by the trials that must sooner or later overtake each one of us. What are the advantages of suffering? There are many; by its means the soul is purified and strengthened, sinners are brought back from their evil ways and sin is expiated. Suffering also detaches us from the things of earth, and is an efficacious means of exercising zeal.

1. Suffering purifies us from the stains of sin; just as dross and metal exist together in the ore, so in the soul of fallen man good and evil are blended. Even when we are in earnest about our salvation, what a life-long task it is to separate the evil that is in us from the good. How often our courage fails in face of the difficulties that beset us. Some do not even try to conquer their faults, so the dross is increased by bad habits. When gold is refined it is cast into the furnace, and, as the metal melts, the dross is separated from it. In like manner the Christian is tried in the furnace of affliction. Our loving Father knows exactly what

trials are necessary to purify each soul. In His mercy He chooses the fittest means, and not a pang is allowed to pierce us without His permission. Suppose death to overtake an ordinary Christian, and that on his death-bed he makes a sincere act of contrition, receives the last sacraments, and expires in the grace of God. How much still remains to be purified "as by fire" before that soul can enter heaven. While we are on earth, God comes to the help of our weak will and lays crosses on our shoulders, which we should never have been generous enough to take up voluntarily, and these are for us a means of purification. Suffering is caused by the very fact of our imperfections. For example, God sends us some sorrow, bereavement, or mental anxiety, if we were perfectly conformed to God's will the trial would be robbed of its bitterness. Instead of accepting our crosses as a means of purification we are too apt to reject the chalice and to rebel against our Creator.

2. Suffering strengthens the soul by calling into vigorous exercise the virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Moreover, it helps us to practise the usual virtues of patience, courage, and resignation. The soul that has endured some trial bravely comes forth strengthened, just as the wrestler gains strength by wrestling. Certain crosses call forth heroic acts of virtue, and sanctify us in a short time. When, therefore, some sorrow overtakes you, look back over your past life and often you will see that it is sent to strengthen you in the practice of some virtue. A young girl who earned her living respectably as a machinist in one of the

large London warehouses, was subjected for many years to a very bitter trial. She had a disreputable mother, who, dressed in rags, used to waylay and importune her for money. The poor girl felt the humiliation keenly, and in despair had almost resolved to run away from the wretched abode she called home. Yet she was the only child and sole bread-winner. Once in her summer holidays she went away for a little rest, and during that time made a few days' retreat. In those precious moments of grace God spoke to her heart; she saw clearly that this trial was allowed to humble her, for she had a proud nature, and for years had prayed sincerely, "O God, crush out my pride and make me truly humble." Our heavenly Father was answering this prayer in a way she had little anticipated, for her mother had not always been a disgrace to the family. From that time the daughter took up her cross bravely. She was faithful to duty and made rapid progress in humility. Some few years after her retreat she had the consolation of seeing her mother die truly penitent and reconciled to God. With her last breath she thanked Him for her daughter's patient forbearance.

3. How often has sorrow been the means of bringing a sinner back to God. Our Lord shows us this truth in the parable of the prodigal son. It was when a famine arose in the land that he determined to arise and go to his father. In prosperity, man wanders far from God; forgetting his Creator, he abuses the things of earth. Then sorrow comes; when bodily pain or some exterior trial overtakes him he begins to enter into himself,

and this reflection is generally the prelude to a sincere conversion. Sometimes the trial takes the form of privation. A man desires health, wealth, or some other satisfaction, but God refuses it, knowing that it would be injurious. There is a pretty legend of Sir Brasil and the Falcon; it teaches a useful lesson, which all Christians should take to heart. The story runs thus:—

"Sir Brasil, a brave knight, was very tired on one occasion, having hunted the entire day. The falcon that rested on his wrist was tired too; and so the knight, when he sat down to rest, released the bird. There was a crystal stream of water issuing from a rock near by, and Sir Brasil, making a cup of the bugle he wore, filled it from the spring and would have carried it to his lips, but the falcon, with sudden spring, dashed it from his hands. Again he filled the cup, and again the falcon prevented him from drinking it. Enraged at this he cried: 'I will wring thy neck if thou dost that again.' Then he filled the cup a third time, and a third time the falcon threw it to the ground. At that Sir Brasil struck his feathered friend, and he fell dead. Then, looking up, the knight saw that a large serpent was dropping venom from its fangs into the spring. 'The falcon saved my life,' said the knight sadly, 'and I have deprived him of his.'"

We often rebel when some cup is withheld from our lips, not knowing that it is kept from us out of the purest love; like children, unaware of what is good for us; or like Sir Brasil, enraged with him who would instruct and save us.

4. Suffering detaches us from the things of

earth. We fix our affections on some creature; we enshrine it in God's place in our heart; it is our one treasure, and this attachment is a constant occasion of sin. Our loving Father sees the danger we are incurring, and He shatters our idol. Perhaps it was wealth that was absorbing all our thoughts. We become poor and have to toil for our daily bread, or at least to take a much lower social position. Then we see to what peril we were exposing our immortal soul, and learn to detach ourselves from riches. A Child of Mary falls in love with one who is not likely, if she marries him, to make her happy. Her infatuation prevents her from either seeing his faults or weighing their consequences. To please him, she is willing to give up even her faith. She experiences a bitter deception, or death breaks off the engagement, and then only does our Child of Mary see what a dangerous path she has been treading; and when time has healed the wound, she will thank God for having forcibly held her back.

5. Another advantage of suffering is that it merits for us, if patiently endured, an eternal weight of glory. How could we work out our salvation and satisfy God for our sins if we had no cross to bear? Of all good works, suffering is the one which helps us most efficaciously to lay up treasure in heaven, since there is less danger of our being robbed of our merit by self-love when we suffer than when we perform other good deeds. A soldier who rebelled against his general knew that he would shortly be called to give an account of his conduct. He had three friends. He went to the first and begged him to accompany him and

plead his cause. "I cannot," replied the friend, "since my presence would only incriminate you. Remember I was a partner in your rebellion." The man applied to his second friend, who likewise refused on the ground that he could not appear before the general without a special summons. In despair, the soldier applied to his third friend, who answered: "Most willingly; I will not only accompany you, but will even precede you and plead your cause." This is a little parable in which man is the rebel who must appear before God to give an account of himself. Wealth is the guilty accomplice; his friends and relations are represented by the second friend, and they can only accompany the sinner to the threshold of eternity, while good works precede and speak in his favour. Adversity helps us to realise how powerfully sorrows plead for us with God. Since suffering merits such a great reward in heaven, we must try to bring home to ourselves practically that "through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God," and this will lessen the weight of the cross. We are immortal, and, for a true Christian, suffering can but endure for a time.

Is the weight of the cross bearing heavily on you, Child of Mary? Let God's promises be your consolation. "I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them and make them joyful after their sorrow." "The Lord shall wipe away tears from every face." Day by day, as you bear your cross patiently, your reward is accumulating in heaven, "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh far above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."

If the saints in heaven could regret anything, would it not be that when on earth they had not suffered more for God?

6. Suffering helps to save souls. St. Paul asserts this when he says: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus;" and again, "Whether we be in tribulation, it is for your exhortation and salvation." It was by suffering that Christ redeemed the world, and it is by the same means that we obtain the salvation of our brethren. The saints lived up to this doctrine; how St. Francis Xavier and St. Peter Claver toiled for love of souls. What apostolic zeal inspired St. Theresa and drove her to an austere life of prayer and penance that she might win souls to God. Most of us have some of our family who are on the broad road, and if we are in earnest about their salvation, we shall profit by the crosses God sends us, and even impose voluntary mortifications on ourselves to obtain their conversion.

What lessons do these few thoughts on suffering teach us? Evidently the first is to accept suffering for *ourselves* and *those* we love when Gods sends it. To accept it for self is generally far easier than to see those we love suffer. We know not what cross is best for us, but God knows and He will send it; when it comes it must be received as His messenger. He may afflict a parent or a loved friend; then the Child of Mary must remember that that parent or friend is far dearer to God than to her. The Creator must govern His own creatures without our interference. We also learn the lesson that suffering is inevitable; we cannot

escape it. Hence it is an illusion to imagine that when this particular cross, which now presses on our shoulders, is removed, all will be smooth sailing. No, there are other rocks ahead, other storms pending. As long as we tread this earth we must struggle with pain and sorrow in some form or other. To-day, bodily pain attacks us; to-morrow brings a mental affliction, and so it must be through life. Since this is so, surely it is but common prudence to be prepared and to have the courage to refuse ourselves certain unnecessary satisfactions that we may the better accept the trials God sends us.

We must learn also to prize and esteem the cross. If we think of all the graces suffering brings, we shall accept it more cheerfully, and thus deprive it of part of its bitterness. God is with us, and will give the needful help and strength, and we must let these thoughts cheer us. Every pang is accompanied with the grace to bear it; no pain is sent unnecessarily. In all our troubles God is a sure refuge, for "underneath are the everlasting arms," lest we "faint by the way." If, however, suffering is to be such a precious auxiliary in the work of our sanctification, we must suffer with the right dispositions, so let us briefly enumerate a few. We should bear our cross, whatever it be, with resignation, humility, patience, calmness, cheerfulness, self-forgetfulness, and, if possible, with joy. This is a difficult programme, is it not? Yes, without the grace of God it would be impossible to carry out; but if our loving Father uphold his weak, suffering child, it is a programme which can be realised, and God never fails in His part; it is

we who shrink from the task. Besides, the list of virtues enumerated above need not frighten you; aim at practising *one* of them, and the others will follow as a natural consequence.

The first disposition is resignation, and this does not necessarily imply the absence of any contrary sentiment. We may feel inclined to rebel, but if we pay no heed to our natural inclinations and have a *good will* to accept the trial, God counts it to our credit that we thus conquer our natural repugnance to suffer. Resignation exists in the *will*, not in our *feelings*; though after generous efforts, even our inferior nature may be subdued by the grace of God. Is some trouble weighing you down, and are you sorely tempted to murmur and rebel? Make it a practice to repeat frequently the prayer Jesus uttered in Gethsemane: "Not My will, but Thine be done." Go on saying it, and, little by little, it will become easier. Do not be discouraged if you break out now and then into fretful complaints. To be truly humble is a great help towards suffering well. To realise that we deserve *all*, and even more than we are enduring, is a salutary check against fretfulness and repining.

A long-continued illness or any prolonged trial needs great patience and constancy. Often we are very brave at the beginning, but, as the cross continues to bear us down, we get irritable and capricious. Perhaps the best remedy against impatience is to look at the crucifix, and to call to mind all that our Saviour has suffered for us. If you feel your patience escaping you, and that you are on the verge of being irritable and bad-

tempered, *unite yourself to the patience of Jesus*, and ask that by His heroic acts of longanimity, you may have grace to conquer.

Keep calm under the cross. Do not increase its load by adding imaginary increments. Meditate on St. Theresa's book-mark :

> "Let nothing trouble thee,
> Let nothing affright thee ;
> All passeth away ;
> God changeth not.
> By patience
> All things are obtained ;
> To him who hath God
> Nothing is wanting ;
> God alone suffices."

Cheerfulness lightens our crosses wonderfully. Some people are naturally bright, others are more inclined to look on the seamy side of events, but all can at least cultivate cheerfulness, and one of the best means of so doing is to interest ourselves in the joys and sorrows of our relations and friends. Occupation is a great help in brightening up an invalid or mourner. A good amusing book has a powerful influence on the spirits. A well-known author, Russell Lowell, was stricken with his last illness ; he received a visit from Oliver Wendell Holmes, who enquired kindly after his health. "I don't know how I am," was the reply, "and I don't care ; I'm reading 'Rob Roy,'" and he held up the little book and smiled brightly. How many other invalids has Sir Walter Scott cheered up in like manner? Certainly thousands have to thank Dickens for furnishing them with a healthy diversion in their dark hours. It is said that Queen Maud of Norway almost knows

the "Christmas Carol" by heart. She once remarked: "No one can be really bad who can cry over Tiny Tim. Whenever I feel that I am getting a wee bit selfish, I read the "Christmas Carol" through, then I feel as though I must do something to brighten the lives of the many brave-hearted little cripples there are in the world. About a week before Christmas Day, she used to send a number of large parcels to the various London homes for cripples and deformed children, and to each parcel is attached a card upon which is written: "With Tiny Tim's love."

Lastly, there is a very perfect way of suffering, and that is, not only to be cheerful, but even *joyful*. The saints suffered cheerfully for Christ's sake; they accepted joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and our dear Lord experienced a deep joy when He suffered for our salvation. This is a high standard, but we need to aim high if we would not fail to hit the mark. At least we shall not be tempted to be conceited at our little successes when we look at the saints and martyrs, who counted it all joy when they fell into divers temptations. If we cannot always be joyful, we can at least make acts of this virtue from time to time; and, as we look at the examples of our Master and of the saints who served Him so faithfully, we shall be encouraged to persevere on the rugged road, to shoulder our cross bravely, looking at our Saviour "Who goeth before."

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

WHEN the outlook seems very gloomy, are you sometimes tempted, Child of Mary, to sit down and indulge in a fit of the blues? There are moments in the life of each one when real difficulties stand in the path, and trials, like dark clouds, lower overhead; so it is not astonishing when this happens to you; and if, so far, the sun of prosperity has shone on your road, be sure that God loves you too well to allow you to tread such an easy path always. Some day, sorrows must fall to your lot, and bereavements overwhelm you with grief. When, on the ocean, the sailors foresee that a storm is at hand, they make their preparations. In the same way, since we know that trials will inevitably overtake us, we must get ready to meet them. How can we do this? By cultivating in our soul a firm confidence in our heavenly Father's unfailing providence: come what may, we know that our lot is in His hands; He guides our path, and loves each of His children with an infinite love.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks so touchingly of God's providence: He bids us consider the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, and how God supplies all their necessities. Then He draws the obvious conclusion that, if God thus

feeds the birds and clothes the flowers of the field, He will most surely provide for His own beloved children. Whenever you feel despondent, look at the birds and call to mind the Master's words: "Are you not of much more value than they?" Remember, also, the solemn lesson which Jesus would have us learn: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." St. Paul takes up the same beautiful thought in his epistle to the Romans: "To them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as according to His purpose are called to be saints. For whom He foreknew, He predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren."

Let us consider some of those "things which work together unto good." "All things" include health, sickness, natural and supernatural gifts, joys and sorrows, time, friends, failures, and successes—in a word, all that surrounds us or falls to our lot. How many millions of human beings have trod this earth, and yet no two have been or are alike in every respect. Each soul has its own path marked out by God. Our gifts differ, our environments vary, and even where exterior circumstances seem similar, men use them differently, and thus cut out fresh tracks.

Do you enjoy good health? If so, remember that this is a precious gift of God. *Use* this gift, do not *abuse* it. So many young people ruin their health by foolishness as regards dress, food, and sleep. We never really appreciate good health until we lose it. As long as you are well, you can

devote yourself to your daily duties and lead a useful life; so take care of your health, do not ruin it by caprice and daintiness as regards food, or by following those absurd fashions which, by injuring the vital organs, prevent you from breathing freely or taking proper exercise.

Are you delicate—is bad health your cross? Then remember it is one of the "all things" that contribute to your sanctification; you must be patient; do your best to occupy yourself, and if this be impossible, remember that your inactivity, if patiently borne, is very meritorious in God's sight, and will bring down abundant blessings on both your own soul and your family, since it affords the latter constant opportunities of practising charity.

Joys and sorrows have been discussed in another chapter, and we have seen there what powerful means of sanctification they are, so let us utilise them as they come, for they are both God's messengers. Are you in sorrow? Hold on firmly to God and hope for the best:

> "And should the twilight darken into night,
> And sorrow grow to anguish, be thou strong:
> Thou art *in* God, and nothing can go wrong,
> Which a fresh life-pulse cannot set right."

Is joy actually brightening your life? Let it lead you to God, and, in a spirit of thankfulness, *let your life be a continual "Te Deum."*

True friends are helps on the right road, while those who betray our trust and deal falsely with us, help to detach us from creatures. If we are true ourselves, we shall always find some faithful friends in whom we can confide. Others will fail us, but

neither friends nor foes should turn us from the path of duty. St. Paul knew by experience what it was to be in perils from his own nation, from the Gentiles, and from false brethren; but through evil and good report he went forward in the path of duty, "looking on Jesus."

Has God blessed you with natural gifts? Do your best to use them wisely as a *talent*, not as your own by right. Often God, long before the hour of death, deprives us of some sense or gift. If your natural abilities make you proud, if they lead you to despise others, then they are hindering your salvation. Have you few natural gifts? Are you what the world calls a very ordinary person? Do not repine, be content; do not envy those on whom God has bestowed more. If He has given less He will exact less, and it does not need a brilliant intelligence to be able to serve God. Your intellectual poverty need not prevent your acquiring the best riches, that is salvation and sanctification.

Failures, rightly used, are stepping-stones which enable us to pursue our path. Perhaps we were inordinately attached to our position in life, or to the realisation of some project on which we had set our whole heart, to the neglect of holier duties. Failure came, and our idol lay shattered, then we awoke to the danger we were incurring.

These are a few of the "all things" that work together for good. Notice that God's views of what is *good* do not always coincide with ours, but He sees what is most truly beneficial for His creatures, and all the events that occur are like so many parts of a complicated machine. Each has its place and work; none can be dispensed with.

Eternity will reveal to us how our path was interwoven with our neighbours' paths, while the whole design was the work of our heavenly Father. God governs His world with infinite wisdom, and we must submit with true humility and loving confidence. All that pleases or troubles us lasts but for a moment, and nothing that is not eternal is really important. From this standpoint, the things of earth dwindle down; and this is how we shall regard the past as we look back from our death-bed over the track we have followed.

We must firmly believe that "all things work together unto good to them that love God." Perhaps you are inclined to exclaim, "But I do not feel that I love God." This by no means proves that you do not love Him. Love lies in the will, not in mere sentiment, though the latter may be helpful. If you have a firm will to serve God, to lead a Christian life, and to live in the light of eternity, you do love God, though you may not experience great feelings of devotion. Our dear Lord teaches us this when He says: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. vii.). Evidently the great test of love is the accomplishment of the will of God. The one end of our existence is to glorify Him by our faithful service; the meanest action is ennobled the moment that it becomes God's will for us. This holy will may call you to shine in public, to do great things for God; or it may lead you by a humble and obscure path. The innumerable details of our daily life

are for us the expression of the will of God. Nothing is too trivial or beneath us, if it is our duty. Jesus came on earth to do His Father's will. Mary, our Mother, knew the "Our Father" well, and repeated it frequently. With what fervour would she have said, "Thy will be done," for more than any other creature she realised what that holy will exacted of Jesus, her beloved Son. We should have a firm confidence that, whatever God's holy will asks of us, we can accomplish.

As Christians, we must seek *first* the kingdom of God and do His will; it is the condition on which all our necessities for soul and body are supplied. "All things work together for good to those who love God" and put Him first in their daily lives. What a glorious destiny is ours! "Called to be saints, predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son." Yes, *from eternity* God has *foreknown* us, as we are, with all our weakness, imperfections, and faults. He foreknew us also with our capabilities for good. God has known us *from all eternity!* We cannot fathom this mystery: we can but adore and thank our God for all His loving tenderness.

Not only He knew us, but He "destined us to be made conformable to the image of His Son." Think of what this means. We, simple creatures of clay, who have frequently offended God, are called to be living images of Jesus, His only begotten Son. He is our Divine Model, and our life-work is to imitate Him, in Whom all the virtues exist in their highest perfection. In the Church of God there are men and women consecrated to God who devote themselves to reproduce in their lives

some special traits of our Lord's character. Thus, the contemplative orders imitate our Lord in His life of prayer and union with God; others, like the Franciscans and the Trappists, strive to copy His poverty and austerity. There are monks and nuns who devote themselves to imitate the mercy and compassion of our Saviour by nursing the sick and relieving the poor. When Jesus was on earth He called little children around Him that He might bless them; and in the Church the great work of the teaching orders is to bring the little ones to Christ, to teach them His doctrines, and to watch over their innocence. The preaching orders go forth to convert sinners and win souls to God, just as our Saviour preached to the multitudes during His public life. Thus, the different orders and congregations in the Catholic Church make up one great body, which has for its object to copy the divine life of Jesus.

The martyrs show forth constancy in suffering, the confessors trample under foot human respect, the virgins give to the world an example of holy purity, but for each and all Jesus is the one perfect Model. All the saints walked in the paths of heroism, "looking on Jesus," and thus were enabled to live—

> "In scorn
> With miserable aims that end in self."

Thank God, the duty and privilege of following in the footsteps of Jesus is not confined to those especially consecrated to God, nor to the canonised saints. You are Children of Mary, that is, children of the Mother of God, who is the most perfect copy of Jesus. "*Noblesse oblige*": the scions of a noble race must not degenerate. You are destined

to be made conformable to the First-born among many brethren. Jesus is your elder Brother, and you are called to be a saint. As you look at your divine Copy and then at your miserable attempts at imitation, what a disheartening contrast presents itself. The devil glides near to whisper, "It is no use trying: you cannot imitate our Lord." This is a lie; with God's grace you can, nay more, you must, since grace is bestowed freely for your sanctification and salvation.

How are you to set about this herculean task? With a firm confidence that *it is far more God's work than yours.* Your chief part is that of co-operation. Let God do His work in your soul; ask Him to plant there the germs of His own virtues. When He comes to you in Holy Communion, His hands are laden with graces. Remember our Lord's words, "Ask, and ye shall receive"; take Him at His word, and pray with confidence. This is the first step towards imitating our Lord. Know what virtue you most need. There are different stages in the spiritual life, When we start on the narrow way, our chief occupation is to uproot notable defects; then we have to acquire by prayer and generous efforts some special virtue. What is the one virtue you most need? Probably that which is diametrically opposed to your besetting sin. Be quite clear as to what you are striving after. Do not fight as one "beating the air." Then endeavour by progressive steps to acquire it. Begin by the lesser acts, leaving the more difficult ones till you are spiritually stronger. Profit by "all things which work together for good," and instead of repining when trials cross your path

utilise them as a means of advancing in holiness.

Above all, never be discouraged. Jesus is your Saviour and Helper; His treasures of grace are open to you as though you were alone on earth to profit by them, for God's riches are infinite, the multitude of recipients does not diminish His boundless store. In the heart of Mary you have your special place. Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist, gives Himself, Body, Soul and Divinity to you. Are not these precious sources of confidence? Distrust yourself as much as you please, but never be guilty of distrusting God. Let your weakness and faults drive you into our Saviour's arms, whence none can pluck you. No matter how often you fail in your good resolutions, begin again with fresh courage. Life is made up of beginnings, for each day we start on a new stage of our journey. So it is in the spiritual life.

How full Holy Scripture is of exhortations to trust in God. Read through the Psalms and notice how frequently the writers make acts of confidence in God. Make a little selection from these inspired prayers, and repeat them slowly and prayerfully when you are tempted against hope. If only you have a firm confidence in God your life will be brighter on earth, your crown more glorious in heaven, for confidence honours God, keeps us from falling into sin, and helps us to become conformable to the image of our Saviour. "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" is the cry of the soul that is *sure* of God. Let it be your frequent prayer during life, Child of Mary, in all your dark hours, and it will rise spontaneously from your soul on the brink of the river of death.

FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

LET us pay a visit in spirit to that upper room where Jesus celebrated the Pasch with His disciples, and instituted the Holy Eucharist. It is night. Judas has gone forth alone, and the other eleven apostles are gathered around their divine Master. They have partaken for the first time of the Bread of Life, and have heard our Lord's solemn discourse. How they must have gazed on His sacred features and listened to every word that fell from His lips, when He bid them remain united to Him as the branch is joined to the vine, and explained the great commandment of Christian love by which men were to recognise them as His disciples. Jesus goes on to give them a glimpse of the future. Persecutions were to be their lot when, in obedience to His divine command, they should go forth to testify to the world concerning the Son of God. But the Holy Ghost was to be their divine Consoler, who would strengthen them in all their trials and enable them to triumph over human weakness. Then our Lord revealed to them that the hour predicted by Zacharias was close at hand. The Good Shepherd was about to be taken from the sheep, and the flock were to be dispersed.

As the disciples listened to these divine words, sorrow must have inundated their souls, though as yet they did not fully realise how near was the accomplishment of these prophecies. Then having prepared His disciples for what was awaiting them, Jesus turned to His heavenly Father, and the last moments which He passed in the cenacle were spent in prayer. The apostles were privileged to witness the prayer of Jesus, to hear His divine words, and to gaze on His uplifted features. What intense grief the face of Jesus betrayed, while at the same time it was illuminated with a divine peace and joy. The hour for which He so ardently longed was at hand, and in prayer Jesus sought strength to accomplish His bitter passion. The Apostles listened with reverent attitude and wrapt attention. St. John, who was nearest to our dear Lord, must have heard each word distinctly, and was allowed to reveal them to us for our consolation and instruction. Who would not envy the beloved disciple as he leaned on his Master's breast? If this beautiful prayer of Jesus thrills us with emotion as we read it, what must have been the feelings of those who heard it uttered under such solemn circumstances? For most of them these were almost the last words they heard from our divine Lord's sacred lips before His death, for, as far as we know, of the eleven apostles, only St. John was near our Lord on Calvary, and heard His seven last words from the cross. Let us listen with them to our dear Lord's prayer; He wills that we should hear it and thus learn precious lessons which will help us to realise more deeply that "having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them

unto the end." The greater part of His prayer was for them; before leaving this earth He gave His loved disciples into the care of their heavenly Father. Jesus begins His prayer: "Father, the hour is come," that hour of the Passion when our Surety was to go forth and tread the wine-press alone. "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee." Jesus was about to be lifted up on the cross that He might draw all men to Him, and now we hear these beautiful words which sum up our Saviour's life: "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do."

Let us meditate on them awhile. Jesus seems to look back over the thirty-three years passed on earth. He had indeed glorified His heavenly Father. Man had revolted against God, he had despised the commands of his Creator, and outraged His infinite perfection. Jesus came on earth, He took our nature upon Him; the God-man worshipped and obeyed His Father in reparation for the forgetfulness, contempt, and malice of fallen humanity. The Incarnate Word glorified God in all His thoughts, words, and deeds. They were all for God or God's creatures. He glorified His Father by the sacred words which He uttered when He trod this earth and instructed humanity. All His deeds were for God, for He Who did all things well, pleased not Himself but preferred ever that which was well pleasing to His Father. When Jesus became incarnate the sons of the morning shouted for joy, and the angels adored our Emmanuel, and glorified the mercy and justice of God, and unceasingly they magnify the loving

kindness of God as revealed by the Incarnation and life of our Saviour.

Not only had Jesus, during the years He passed on earth, glorified God, but He had finished His life's work. When He came into this world His interior disposition was, "Lo, I come to do Thy will." God's will was His guiding star: whither it led, Jesus followed; now it showed the road to Egypt, then it lit up the road to Nazareth, and again it led our Lord forth on His Apostolic journeys, or shone on the road to Calvary. Jesus had finished His work: He had taught His apostles, instructed the people, and fulfilled the prophecies; now the hour had come when He was to accomplish the final act of our redemption. A few hours later, when in agony on the cross, at the close of the unspeakable torments of His bitter passion, He could utter the words, "It is finished," then He will commit His soul to His heavenly Father and yield up the ghost. Now that His human life is reaching its term, Jesus prays, and we hear this solemn declaration: "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." Let us meditate on these words of our divine Lord, and see what lessons they contain for us.

"I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." Jesus is the first-born of many brethren. He is our great example, and, as we read these sacred words, the thought comes home to each one: I, too, am created to glorify God, I must finish the work which He has given me to accomplish. Have you ever realised, Child of Mary, that you were created

for God's glory? No creature can add to God's intrinsic glory, but it is in our power to procure His accidental glory. A masterpiece glorifies the artist, since it procures him fame. Had this picture never come to the knowledge of men, the artist would have reaped no glory from his handiwork. In the same way, creatures glorify God when, by their relative perfections, they reveal the work of the divinity. God is glorified in His saints, and inanimate creation shews forth His power. What a noble destiny is yours, Child of Mary: the end of your existence is to praise God, you are not to live for self nor for the world, you belong to God, you come from Him, and must return to Him. St. Paul teaches us this when he says, "You are bought with a price: glorify and bear God in your body." Our life on earth must be an apprenticeship for heaven, where we shall praise God for all eternity. Mary, our Mother, lived up to this high standard: in every thought, word, and deed, she magnified the Lord and rejoiced in God her Saviour. We are her children, and have the same noble destiny.

How are we to glorify God in our daily life? By faithfully attributing to Him whatever good we do. If we accomplish a good action we do so with the help of God's grace: of ourselves we cannot do right, nor can we resist the temptations that beset us. Hence one way of glorifying God is to conquer pride, and to take our true place, which is that of a sinful creature. We glorify God when we perform our actions with a pure intention. A servant works for his master, and since we are God's servants, our service must be for Him. If

we grasp this truth we shall not content ourselves with simply fulfilling agreeable duties, but as an object or occupation presents itself our question will be: Is it God's will that I should possess this object or take up that occupation? In other words: Is it for God's glory that I should use or abstain from using this creature?

We glorify God by our fidelity to duty, by reverence in prayer, by preserving the purity of our soul. Our salvation will glorify God, for each ransomed soul is a victory won by Jesus over the powers of evil. Our sanctification is indissolubly linked with our salvation. All do not attain the same degree of holiness, for the saints in heaven differ in this respect, as "one star differeth from another in glory." Sometimes we hear a Child of Mary say: "I do not aim at being a saint; so long as I save my soul that is all I care about." In other words, I care only for what concerns myself, and I do not scruple to rob God of the glory which, if I attain a greater degree of sanctity, I should procure for Him. What an ignoble sentiment! Men do not argue thus in temporal matters. The son of a hero longs to be worthy of his father; men sacrifice life for love of their country: shall we, the children of God, be so utterly indifferent as to the glory of our heavenly Father?

How bravely, during the South African war in 1900, our soldiers defended their guns at Colenso. Here is an account of an heroic deed related by an ex-burgher who was fighting on the side of the Boers. It appears that when the gunners and the infantry escort had been either

killed or wounded, this Boer corporal went out with mule-teams to try to haul the guns away. During the approach to the batteries one of the Boers and two of the horses having been shot, a search was made for the unseen enemy. "Then it was, that but thirty feet distant I saw a white, haggard face, with two gleaming, burning eyes, peering over the barrel of a rifle. The khaki soldier, for such he was, probably thought that he had laid me out. That pause was my sole chance, so I fired and shot him in the forehead, blinding for ever those burning eyes. That poor khaki must have been a man of rare courage, a soldier worthy of the best traditions of the British Army. I found that both his legs had been blown off below the knees by the spiteful fire of one of our pom-poms. He had tied the shattered stumps with his putties, and, exerting all his remaining strength, managed to drag himself along, and to pile together a low breastwork of loose stones in front of him. He was one of the infantry escort undoubtedly, and determined to defend the guns whilst life remained." This is a noble example of a hero dying at his post for his country's honour. If only we could be as brave in the face of our spiritual foes, how we should glorify God and sanctify our own souls.

It is not beyond our strength to glorify God, for if sometimes He asks us for heroic deeds, at others, and these occasions are by far the more common, we can procure God's glory by the simplest action, for St. Paul bids us, "Whether ye eat or drink, to do all for the glory of God." When, therefore, Child of Mary, you are tempted to degenerate from the standard set before you,

and to disgrace your noble parentage, call to mind your glorious destiny. Ask yourself: How far am I accomplishing my task of glorifying God? Let this be the aim of your life, and you will live worthy of your noble calling. Meditate frequently on these inspired words: "We are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in him, sanctifieth himself, as he also is holy" (1 St. John iii.). Let these truths rouse you to be generous in God's service.

"I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do." Each Christian has his appointed work. It is personal and must be done by the one to whom it is allotted; for since each has his own set task, it follows that none can accomplish both his own and his neighbour's work. Final perseverance is one of the greatest graces which none can actually merit; it depends on our fidelity in finishing the work which God has appointed. The glory of God and the accomplishment of our set work are linked; whoever glorifies God most certainly finishes his own allotted task. Our heavenly Father bids all His creatures to go and work in His vineyard; He calls them at all hours. What is your work, Child of Mary? Is it to labour for your daily bread, to lead a Christian life in the ordinary beaten track? Are you in a higher social rank? Have you wealth and influence? Then your work is to use them for God, to do good to your neighbours, to fulfil your social duties in a Christian spirit, and to live detached from this world's goods. Do you

feel yourself called to something higher, to consecrate your whole life to good works in the world, or to enter religion? These are paths in which heroism is often needed, for the duties they involve frequently crucify the flesh. Some are called to the married state; their path is clearly pointed out; they must devote themselves to the care of home and children, and this is a noble vocation, for a Christian mother is an immense power for good.

Whatever be our work, we must be faithful in accomplishing it, for only those who persevere to the end will be saved. What does it profit that a vessel has safely made a long and perilous voyage if it perishes within sight of the harbour?

There is a thought that must at some time or other come home forcibly to every earnest Catholic. It is this: "Shall I persevere and die in the grace of God?" So often we hear of those deserting the narrow path who once ran well. They were seduced by worldly interests, or perhaps the obstacle was pride; they could not humble themselves and submit to the teaching of the Church, so they deserted the ranks of the faithful and went over to the enemy. "Shall I persevere; shall I finish the work that God has given me?" This is indeed a solemn question, and one to which only a conditional answer can be given. You will persevere *if* you take the proper means God has willed that we should not have an unconditional assurance of salvation; He foresees perhaps that a sense of security would lead us to negligence in His service. All must work out their salvation with *fear and trembling*. What is necessary in

order to ensure our eternal salvation? Before we discuss the means, let us settle a preliminary point. Are we quite clear as to what God expects of us? If we are on the wrong path, if we are not occupied with our Father's business, most certainly our salvation is in jeopardy. So the first question is, Are you doing the right work? So often we find people who deliberately choose a path in life which they know is not *the one* in which God would have them walk. Thus a girl who ought to devote herself to help at home, prefers living elsewhere that she may have more liberty and pleasure. Or a Child of Mary may be in a house of business where she finds it impossible to serve God and observe the laws of the Church. If for the sake of some temporal advantage, and without necessity, she remains in this position, clearly she cannot then be about her Father's business. We must therefore examine if we are doing the work which God has given us, and this is generally pointed out by Providence. If, however, we cannot decide the question for ourselves, we should explain our position clearly to our confessor and abide by his decision.

Having settled this preliminary important question, let us consider the means which we must take if we would persevere and obtain eternal life. They are numerous, and any *one* well employed would be efficacious. Though our loving Father has not given us a definite assurance of salvation, He has given us ample means of procuring it, and among these we may mention: 1. *Prayer.* 2. *Fidelity in little things.* 3. *Hope in God.* 4. *Zeal for the salvation of others.* 5. *Devotion to our Blessed Lady.* 6. *Charity.*

1. *Prayer* is a means of obtaining eternal life, and we have the authority of Holy Writ, where we read these consoling words: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you: If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?" (St. Matt. vii.). These texts show clearly that prayer is a means of salvation. A man may be dying without any spiritual succour, no priest is at hand to absolve or anoint him, but if that man prays earnestly his salvation is assured, for when our heavenly Father gave to the Church the office of reconciling penitents, He did not renounce that power Himself. No soul ever invoked the mercy of God in vain; nay, the very prayer is a gage that the petition will be heard and answered, for none can pray aright unless God inspires their prayer, and if He gives us the grace to pray, He will surely hear and answer the supplication. Are you sometimes careless about your prayers? Take care, prayer is *a necessary means* of salvation. In spite of aridities and disinclinations, hold on as a drowning man clings to the rope thrown by his deliverer. What an easy condition of salvation prayer is. If, by the mere act of asking, a man could become wealthy, or be cured of some malignant disease, there would be no poor or sick in the world. If a criminal could escape execution and obtain his pardon merely by petitioning the king, there would be no executions. By prayer we obtain spiritual riches, the health of the soul, and even a reprieve from hell; yet, in spite of these precious advantages,

we are so negligent in using this means of grace. Pray constantly, pray well, Child of Mary, and by so doing, your salvation will be assured, and you will be enabled to finish the work allotted to you by your heavenly Father. Listen to those words that fell from our Lord's sacred lips: "Not only for them do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in Me." *You* were included in that prayer, Child of Mary; Jesus prayed for you, will you be so indifferent as to neglect praying for yourself? Our Master taught His disciples to pray, He prayed Himself continually during His human life, and His last words on the cross were addressed to His heavenly Father. Take Jesus for your model, and let your constant prayer be: "Lord, teach us how to pray."

2. *Fidelity in little things* is another sure means of perseverance. Jesus teaches us this truth in the parable of the unjust steward, when He says: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater." We have spoken of little things in the chapter on "Trifles," and we saw there how frequently they present themselves and how greatly they contribute to our sanctification. When you are tempted to neglect or despise little duties, remember that you are *neglecting a means of perseverance.* Support patiently the monotony and tediousness of little duties, since this practice merits for us an incorruptible crown of glory. If we are faithful to the "daily round," we shall certainly not fail when God asks for some greater sacrifice.

3. Holy Scripture tells us: "*We are saved by hope,*" and again: "Commit thy way to the Lord and trust in Him, and He will do it." God binds

Himself to help and deliver those who trust in Him; He cannot fail us when we count on His infinite mercy. Scripture is studded with promises to those who hope in God: "Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him." We must worship God by hope as well as by faith and charity. These are the theological virtues, without which we cannot be saved. How are we to practise the virtue of hope? By never wilfully allowing ourselves to give way to *diffidence*, *distrust*, or *despair*. God cannot forget His creatures, nor be indifferent to their fate. We are His by creation and redemption. A man cherishes anything for which he has paid a great price. We too are bought with a great price, which is none other than the Precious Blood of Jesus. Of ourselves we are poor, weak, sinful creatures, but God is our loving Father, and since He has paid so great a price for our redemption, He wills that not one of His children should be lost. If we hope in God He will deliver us for the glory of His name, and because He loves each one of His creatures. How utterly incapable we are of working out our salvation! With the devil and our own frail fallen nature seeking our destruction, how could we reach heaven without God's assistance? With Him, like St. Paul, we can do all things, and as long as we cling to God, we are endued with His strength and grace. We must never let go our confidence in God, but hope on in the darkest hours, for God who is with us is more powerful than all our foes. In His time He will arise, and our enemies will be confounded. As long as we cling to God by hope our salvation is assured.

4. *Zeal for the salvation of sinners* is a means of

procuring eternal life for ourselves. We read in the book of Daniel: "They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as the stars for all eternity." God has an infinite love for all His creatures, He wills their salvation, and when we co-operate in bringing the lost sheep back to the fold, will the Good Shepherd allow us to perish? This is such a simple means of assuring our perseverance, for there are so many opportunities of helping others. Not a day passes but we have some occasion of doing good by a kind word or deed; at least we can give a good example and pray for those who are far from God. Be on the look-out, Child of Mary, for chances of saying a word in season. Do not let golden opportunities slip by unnoticed. Whatever you do for your neighbour, Christ counts it as done unto Him, and if the smallest alms given in the name of a disciple shall not lose its reward, how much greater will be the recompense of those who strive to do good to an immortal soul? Perhaps you have tried in vain to lead some sinner into the right path, and so far have not succeeded. Never mind, go on, *God counts each effort*, not one escapes His notice; and even though success may not crown your labours as regards the conversion of that sinner, you will not in consequence lose your reward, since God recompenses efforts and not merely results. The good seed which we have sown may bear fruit when we have entered into our rest, and this should encourage us to sow abundantly beside all waters, since we know not which seeds will spring up and bear a golden harvest for eternity.

5. It is a well-known maxim of the saints that

the true servant of Mary shall never perish. Our Immaculate Mother loves each and all of her children, and, when they fall away from God, our Mother's heart grieves over them, and she prays unceasingly for their conversion. Next to Jesus, who has ever loved souls so intensely as our heavenly Mother loves her children? If this be so, how can Mary's faithful children perish? Even when they turn aside from God and lose their baptismal innocence, is not our Lady the Refuge of Sinners? Devotion to Mary is both a gage and a means of final perseverance. Cultivate a tender love and piety for your heavenly Mother, Child of Mary, and thereby you assure the possession of that inestimable gift of final perseverance.

"O Mother, help thy child
To reach the goal at last,
To reign with God and thee
When life's brief day is past."

6. Lastly, the love of God is an all-powerful means of salvation, for if we have to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, we have the precious assurance that perfect love casteth out fear. The more we grow in charity, the more certain we are of obtaining the complete remission of our debts, since many sins are forgiven to those who, like Saint Mary Magdalen, love much. Love enables us to bear, without fainting, the heat and burden of the day. St. Paul, when in prison, as he looked back on his career, could exclaim triumphantly: "I am even now ready to be sacrificed: and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. iv.). Shall we on our death-bed be

able to say as much? Yes, if we have struggled bravely along the narrow way, and tried to fulfil our *daily* task. Our work must be done piecemeal, so to say, for God gives us but one moment at a time, which brings its work with it, and by daily, loving fulfilment of the will of God, our life on earth will be brighter and our perseverance assured.

Strive then to increase your love of God, for love obtains the pardon of sin and unites us to God. The greater our love, the closer our union, and so it is possible to go from strength to strength until we appear before the Lord in Sion and take our place among the redeemed, where for all eternity perfect love shall cast out fear, and where none can pluck us from our Father's arms.

ON DEATH

HAVE you ever seen a person die? Have you knelt and watched the laboured breathing during a terrible agony? If so, then you have had a salutary reminder that you, too, one day must die. Death is a solemn word; so often we have tried in vain to fathom its meaning. We have seen others die, still we cannot bring it home to ourselves—we cannot grasp the meaning of these words: "It is appointed unto all men once to die." For others, we see that death is inevitable: the lesson is enforced on all sides. We see the buds burst forth in spring; they bloom in summer; then comes the autumn, and the trees are stripped of their tinted leaves, which rot under our feet. Nature teaches us that what is composed of matter must be reduced to dust. Yet, in spite of the lessons given us by faith, our fellow-creatures, and nature, we still find it impossible to realise what these words mean: "*I must die.*" Dryden speaks of this strange inconsistency when he tells us: "All men think all men mortal except themselves."

We read in the book of Job: "I know that Thou wilt deliver me to death, where a house is appointed to everyone that liveth." How is it that so few Christians desire to enter into that appointed house? There are several reasons why this fear of death exists. Let us think over a few of them.

Death is foreign to our nature. God did not create us for death, and had Adam never sinned, we should have passed from time to eternity without dying. Sin entered into this world, and brought death in its train. A punishment devised by the Creator must needs be terrible. We know what a fearful thing it is when a limb is forcibly wrenched off. What, then, must be the severing of soul and body? None but those who have endured it can know, and they cannot return to relate their experience. Even if God allowed them to revisit us and to reveal what passes at the hour of death, we should not understand this awful mystery. There are feelings within which we cannot explain, sufferings which cannot be expressed, thoughts which can find no words; and how could any mortal make us comprehend what it is to die?

The union between soul and body is so close; we have no experience of them separately, and this union has existed from the moment of our creation. Each human act is the result of the combined activity of soul and body, for the soul acts through the senses. Imagine a person deprived of every sense—what communication could you hold with such a one? Absolutely none, for all the channels through which we reach the soul are closed. Since death is the separation of soul and body, what marvel that we stand in awe of it?

Death is terrible because it separates us from all we love most on earth. God has placed us in the world, not as solitary units, but as members of the great human family. Our world is the work of God's hands, and it pro-

claims His power and is dear to us. We are also attached to our parents, relations, and friends. There exists deep in our bosom a love of home, of those bound to us by ties of blood or friendship. We cling even to the dwellings in which we have lived—old associations make them dear to us. We have our occupations and our pleasures—they are bound up with our daily life. In the midst of these death comes, and—

> "Finds us 'mid our playthings—snatches us,
> As a cross nurse might do a wayward child,
> From all our toys and baubles."

When, from the shadows of time, that dread voice calls us to the realities of eternity, and breaks the chains that hold us to this world, it is natural that we should fear to obey the summons.

Death is terrible because it leads to the unknown. This thought is beautifully expressed in Hamlet's soliloquy :

> "To die, to sleep,
> No more ! perchance to dream : aye, there's the rub.
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
> Must give us pause."

It is natural for man to tremble before the unknown, as on the brink of a precipice. Once a blind child was sleeping in a room on the second floor of a house. A fire broke out in the kitchen, and the staircase was soon in flames. The child heard the noise, and feeling the heat, instinctively turned to the window, which she opened, and then stood clinging to the framework of the window. The father had been trying to make his way to her room, but had been driven back by the flames. He

then rushed to the front of the house, and saw his child in that perilous situation. There was no ladder at hand, and the flames were raging behind her. Fortunately, the window was not very high, so the father called out, "Jump, Mary, I will catch you." But the child feared to let go, and still clung to the window-frame. Again he ordered her, more imperatively, to jump; still she hesitated. The flames drew nearer and nearer, and only when she felt the hot blast scorching her little feet did she summon up courage to leap into her father's arms.

For the Christian, death is the leap into his heavenly Father's arms. If only we could grasp this truth it would not be so hard to die; but it is the leap in the dark that terrifies us.

Death is followed by judgment, and this is another reason why the holiest so often fear the king of terrors. The creature must stand before God and give an account of his stewardship. He must appear before the tribunal from which there is no court of appeal, in which the decision of the Judge is irrevocable. True, "the righteous hath hope in his death," and "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints"; but nevertheless it is an awful thing to stand before God and to give an account of how we have employed our talents during the brief span of life. If we could die twice, then death would be robbed of part of its terrors, for we should not be risking our eternity on one stake, and, having failed once, we could redeem the past by a new and better life.

Further, *death is a swift rider*—he may overtake us at any moment. A microbe that is invisible

to the naked eye may do its deadly work in the human body, and any instant we may inhale one of these fatal germs.

These are some of the reasons why death is so feared by man. Is there no other side to the question? Yes, surely. When St. Paul desired to be dissolved and be with Christ, his thoughts were fixed on one of the most consoling aspects of death. To die is to be reunited to those whom we have loved and who have preceded us. *In heaven we shall know our own.* There a loved parent, a dear child, or a loving friend waits to welcome us. What a joy it is on earth when all the members of the family meet together. Years pass, death thins the circle; but, if only we die in the grace of God, we shall meet again in heaven. We shall see our loved ones once more. Above all, we shall see Jesus, our Master, and gaze on His sacred features throughout eternity. What a joy to kneel at the feet of our Immaculate Mother, and to make the acquaintance of those saints whom we have loved and honoured on earth! Heaven is the trysting-place to which the angels summon the faithful Christian, but death must open the door, and bid the gaoler life set us free.

"What is Death, father?"
"The rest, my child,
When the strife and the toil are o'er;
The angel of God, who, calm and mild,
Says we need fight no more;
Who, driving away the demon band,
Bids the din of the battle cease;
Takes banner and spear from our failing hand,
And proclaims an eternal Peace."

This beautiful verse brings before us another aspect

of death. It is a *peaceful rest after life's hard battle.* In death "the wearied in strength are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling." The young do not feel the need of rest so much, but those weary toilers who have borne the heat and burden of the day, can look forward to death as a rest from work and a reward of labour.

What a light death flashes on the vanities of life. How insignificant all temporal concerns seem as we stand by a death-bed. *Death is a torch,* in the light of which we are enabled to appreciate the things of earth at their real value. It was thus that the saints of God used the things of earth, or abstained from them, according as these things were helps or obstacles on the road homeward. If we judged all events by the light of death, our lives would be holier. Should we commit sin to please a creature if we remembered how unstable are the friendships of earth? All passes so quickly :—

> "On the ocean of life, we pass and speak one another.
> Only a look, and a voice, then darkness again and a silence."

But *death is the echo of life,* and our death will be what we have made it by our lives. Hence we see how important it is to make them a serious preparation for meeting God. How can we make ourselves ready for the moment when God shall call us to Himself?

The most important preparation for death is to be in a state of grace, and this depends on ourselves, since only wilful, grievous sin can deprive us of the favour of God. As in the army death is the penalty of desertion, so in the spiritual army

of the Church militant eternal death is the punishment of those who, at their last moment, are found in arms against their Creator. A horror of sin is the greatest safeguard against falling into it, and this holy dread includes avoiding those occasions which we know by experience lead us to offend God. A burned child dreads the fire: we should do well to be equally wise.

Do you avoid the occasions of sin, Child of Mary, or do you walk deliberately into them? Perhaps you run the risk, and then excuse yourself by saying, "God can take care of me." Yes, He can; but *will He* do so if you neglect every ordinary precaution? One day a poor wanderer asked hospitality for the night of a Bedouin sheik, who granted it freely. As they were sitting in the tent enjoying a meal, the sheik said to the stranger: "What have you done with your horse?" "I have turned him loose and committed him to Allah," was the reply. "*Go and tether him, and then commit him to Allah,*" answered the sheik. So with our passions, we must not turn them loose and trust that God will prevent any evil resulting, but we must tether them, and then we can count on His grace.

Since death may summon us at any moment, a good preparation is to act with purity of intention, that is, to perform all our actions for God. This implies, of course, doing only those deeds which will please our heavenly Father. Often a Child of Mary is in doubt as to the lawfulness of a given pursuit. A good method of solving the doubt is to ask ourselves whether we should like God to call us in the midst of it. If it is wholesome

recreation, or a good action, we need not fear; but if it is a question of reading a doubtful novel or of indulging in some sinful pleasure, clearly we should not like death to find us thus occupied.

During the fearful gales that swept over the northern hemisphere in 1901, there were some terrible disasters at sea. Off the coast of England, at Caister, a life-boat that put out to help a vessel in distress capsized, and nine of its crew were lost. The wreck occurred at night, and when morning broke, the bodies of some of the poor fellows were seen under the boat. One of the survivors, an old man of sixty, helped to haul over the boat, and he found his son, Aaron, dead *at his post* in the stern by the tiller. The father was justly proud of his son's heroic death. It is a noble thing to die at our post, but if we would meet death at our post, we should *live* there. We must also be faithful to our spiritual exercises. If we knew the date of our death, we should not neglect prayer that day; and as we are in ignorance when life will end for us, we must pass each one as though we knew it to be the last. Hence, never neglect, through carelessness, indolence, or any other wrong motive, to frequent the sacraments at the stated times laid down by your confessor. Be true to your rule of monthly confession and communion, for the sacraments help us to lead a holy life, which is the most efficacious preparation for death. It is also a good practice of devotion to make a definite preparation for death during the annual retreat and on the day of your monthly recollection. If you do this regularly, you will not have a long account to make up should death overtake you suddenly.

A Child of Mary who makes her yearly retreat fervently will never go far on the wrong path.

Finally, we must live detached from inordinate affection to the things of this earth. Those who make an idol of wealth, comfort, or pleasure, will find it hard when they are called to leave all and to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. Look at that dying millionaire: his coffers are full, he leaves millions to his heirs; men think only of the fortune he is bequeathing. "What has he left *behind*, and to whom does it go?" is their question. Meanwhile, the angels of God are standing by that death-bed. They, too, have a question to ask: "What good works has he sent *before*?" How differently men and angels look at a man's life! Whose view is the more correct? Surely that of those pure spirits who stand before the throne of God and judge in the light of eternity.

These are the principal means we should take in order to obey our dear Lord's command: "Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is." Then, when the summons comes, we shall be ready to go forth to meet the Bridegroom; for if our lamps are trimmed, we are sure of hearing the welcome home: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE HOME OF OUR ETERNITY.

SHORTLY after the abolition of slavery in the Northern States of America, a vessel bound for Massachusetts was sailing along the Atlantic coast. The ship had had a terrible passage, and carried a large number of passengers from the South. Among them was a negro slave who had broken his chains and escaped from a cruel master. As the ship approached the harbour, the fugitive stood in the bow of the vessel. He seemed unconscious of all around him, as with intense emotion he gazed on the shore. Presently the keel of the vessel grated against the timbers that supported the pier; then, with a mighty effort, the negro took a tremendous leap on to the land. Stunned by the shock, he fell to the ground and lay prostrate for a moment, but, quickly recovering himself, rose, and with hands raised to heaven and eyes filled with tears, he exclaimed: "My God, I thank Thee, I am free." What intense joy must have filled his soul. We can imagine how anxiously he had waited for that moment, how he must have feared lest he should fail to reach a free country. Is not there some resemblance between this fugitive slave and every Christian soul? We were born under the tyranny of the devil, by baptism we obtain our freedom, and our life may be compared

to a homeward journey towards a free land across a stormy ocean beset by perils.

Are we as much in earnest about obtaining our spiritual freedom as this poor negro was about his emancipation? Do we long to set foot in the house of our eternity, where we shall be free from the thraldom of the devil, the world, and the flesh? As children we read the inspired descriptions of heaven, and probably thought of it far oftener than we do at present. Imagination, which is so vivid in childhood, formed pictures of that blest abode where sin never enters. We gazed on a glorious sunset, and fancied that the golden streaks of light were reflections of the jasper sea, and that through them the angels ascended and descended to minister to us. Our souls were pure then, and grasped the eternal truths more readily; we knew little or nothing of the sorrows of earth, and instinctively we looked on the brighter side of the life after death.

Time passes, we grow up, and the things of this world engross us. So rarely now we think of heaven, perhaps we only give it a casual thought when Ascension Day or All Saints' comes round, or when one we love is taken from us. As old age creeps on, the thought of heaven generally presents itself more frequently. Most aged Christians long for rest, the turmoil of life is over for them, and as they await the Master's summons they naturally think of the home of their eternity. On the other hand, by a strange contradiction, those who have no vital faith seem to cling more tenaciously to the shadows of earth as they approach the shores of eternity.

Some years ago a group of many ragged, dirty children were sitting on a broken kerb-stone in one of the worst districts of London, as Thackeray, the novelist, a reputed cynic, was passing along that way. To his surprise he caught the words, "There is a happy land, far, far away." He stopped and looked at the children, they seemed to realise the meaning of that simple hymn, for, in spite of their poverty, they looked full of joy. He lingered for a moment and listened to the childish voices, then overcome by emotion, he hurried away to conceal his tears. The thought of that "happy land far away" went home to his heart. Yes, if man will only stop to reflect he must feel that earth is an exile, and that nought here below can really satisfy the human soul.

Holy Writ, in figurative language, reveals to us something of the glories of heaven. Daniel, during the Babylonish captivity, had a vision of God. He tells us, "I beheld till thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days sat: His garment was white as snow . . . His throne like flames of fire, and the wheels of it like burning fire . . . Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." St. Paul was "rapt even to the third heaven . . . He was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter." But of all the saints, St. John, the beloved disciple, was the privileged one to whom God revealed most of the glories of heaven. When banished by the heathen emperor, Domitian, to the lonely island of Patmos, he was allowed to contemplate the "great multitude, which no man could number, of all

nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues: standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: And they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures: and they fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God, saying: Amen, benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen." (Apoc. vii.). Then he goes on to tell us how, in that blest abode, there is "no more hunger or thirst. . . . for the Lamb shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Such is the picture of heaven set before us by the inspired word of God. Absolute bliss and purity, the absence of all that causes suffering, and the joy of being united to God for all eternity.

Such is the glorious home of your eternity, Child of Mary. Thither you are journeying, and sooner or later, if only you persevere, you will enter that realm of perfect bliss where time shall be no more, and where the soul shall be eternally inebriated with the purest joys. Jesus, our Master, tells us: "Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also." How true this is. The miser thinks only of his gold, the mother's thoughts are centred in her home and children, the ambitious man unceasingly pursues fame.

What is your treasure, Child of May? You must have one, for the human soul always seeks

some object on which to lavish its affections, and if God be not our treasure, then inevitably we must be attached to creatures or to ourselves, and thus compromise our eternal salvation. If we are living for God we have treasures in heaven. In what do they consist? Let us briefly consider them together.

In heaven we have *our name* inscribed in the book of life. St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, speaks of his fellow labourers, whose names were in the book of life, and St. John, who saw this sacred volume, tells us that those shall enter heaven whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb. When we were baptised our names were inscribed as children of the Church in that book of life. When we consecrated ourselves to our Immaculate Mother, we were enrolled amongst her special children, and had a further right to have our names written in heaven. God treats us as His beloved children: "I am the Lord, I have even called thee by thy name." Our parents and intimate friends call us by our Christian name, and God seems here to shew us with what familiarity He treats us. The Good Shepherd knows each of His flock, for "He calleth His own by name." Thus, when after the resurrection Jesus exacted from His penitent disciple a triple reparation of love, He called him by his name. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Jesus appeared to St. Mary Magdalen in the garden, but only when He called her Mary did she recognise Him.

"His name shall be on their foreheads," is a solemn promise made to those who are victorious in the combat against the devil. If we are striving

to lead Christian lives, if we are doing our best to live up to our calling, then in spite of falls and human frailty we may confidently hope that our names are written in the book of life, and that one day, which is perhaps nearer than we think, our Saviour will address us by that "new name, which no man knoweth but he who receiveth it." What a joy it will be to hear our name fall from the sacred lips of Jesus. Mary, our Mother, most certainly will know it also, and this thought should animate us to live worthy of our high calling. This will help us to resist temptation valiantly, while at the same time we obey the Master's precept, "Rejoice in this that your names are written in heaven."

There, too, is *the home of our eternity*, and this is another of our treasures. "Man goeth to the home of his eternity," slowly but surely, hour by hour, we go to Him that sent us. Our Saviour tells us: "In My Father's house there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." What do we associate with the word *home*, this word which has such a magic charm for the wanderer, for home is a milestone whence we measure all distances, it is the spot to which our "heart untravelled fondly turns, and drags at each remove a lengthening chain." Our home is a permanent dwelling where we find *rest*, *food*, *clothing*, *a safe shelter*, and the *society* of those we love best on earth. Shall we find all this in the home of our eternity? Yes, and infinitely more, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God has prepared for those that love Him."

St. Paul tells us that a rest remaineth for the people of God, and he exhorts us, saying: "Let us hasten to enter into that rest." Here, on earth, labour and persecution fall to our lot, but in heaven the wicked cease from troubling, the weary in spirit enjoy perfect rest and peace. Then in all its fulness will the divine promise be accomplished. "Come to Me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." The weary traveller needs *food*, and in heaven the soul will be satiated with the hidden manna and torrents of delight. We were created for God and must be nourished by Him. In eternity we shall be for ever united to our Creator. Here below often the soul has hungered for justice; we have sought to satisfy its cravings with the husks this world affords, but they could not nourish an immortal soul. There is ever the longing for something higher and holier. The joys and distractions of earth may deaden for a time this soul-hunger for God, but they cannot satisfy it. Truly, "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Then indeed, "They shall no more hunger or thirst when they have tasted that hidden manna," which is reserved for the victorious, but if we would taste that heavenly manna we must hunger and thirst for justice here below.

St. John saw the Church of God arrayed as a bride, "with fine linen glittering with white," this represents the garment of holiness, those garments which have been cleansed in the Blood of the Lamb, as no fuller on earth can whiten them. What a consolation it is to know that the saints needed to cleanse their robes. Like us, with the

exception of our blessed Lady, they were weak and sinful creatures. They yielded more or less frequently to temptation, but, as often as they fell, they rose again, and now they are without a spot before the throne of God. Are you in the habit of bemoaning the stains of sin instead of cleansing them by an act of contrition? Be wiser in future. Is not the precious Blood of Jesus the remedy for sin? Use it, and glorify God, instead of wasting time in useless lamentations. Utilise your treasure in heaven, its efficacy is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We must cleanse our robes *on earth* if we would ever enter heaven. At least we must be free from all great sins, and either our penitential works or the purifying flames of purgatory will accomplish the rest. Never remain with a sin-stained soul when you have the infinite merits of the Precious Blood as much at your disposal as if Christ had died for you alone.

In our earthly home we feel a certain security; it is our little castle, and this is but a feeble image of that perfect safety which we shall experience in heaven. There none shall pluck the redeemed from our Saviour's arms; Satan cannot enter that abode of peace, the world is excluded, and the soul is no longer tormented by evil passions. Fear of danger may pursue us on earth, but it never crosses the threshold of heaven. Sin and its consequences cannot enter there, where reigns that perfect love which casteth out fear. Above all, home is dear, because there we meet and converse with those we love. Home would not be so dear if they were absent. Our loved parents, brothers, sisters, and friends gather round the hearth and form the staple

of its joys. In the same way we have a family in heaven; many whom we have dearly loved have preceded us, they have entered into their rest, and are waiting to welcome us. There are saints and angels, who, like us, belong to the Church of Christ. What a happiness it will be to meet and converse with those whose memory we have venerated on earth, to thank them for their loving care and intercession, and to praise God with them. Our heavenly Father awaits us, and Mary our Mother greets her children as they cross the threshold of heaven. Moreover, we shall abide there for all eternity, and this crowns our happiness. When you repeat the words, "Our Father Who art in *heaven*," you are speaking of your own home. Think of all that "home" implies, and then remember that heaven fulfils all the conditions of a most perfect home, where every want is satisfied and where God inundates His elect with the fulness of divine consolations.

There is yet another treasure awaiting us promised in those solemn words of Holy Scripture, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." The saints took God at His word; thus we find St. Paul, in all confidence, looking forward to his reward, when he says: "There is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, will render to me in that day." He expects his crown from the *justice* of God, Who is faithful to His promises; and then to console those who heard these words, the apostle goes on to assure them that that crown is not only reserved for him but for all that love the coming of our Lord. St. James teaches the same doctrine:

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, he shall receive the crown of life which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

How consoling these promises are, they shew us that every effort we make for God is rewarded with unspeakable gifts. Do you think sometimes of your crown, Child of Mary? Do you try daily to set fresh jewels in it? Now a large one, now a smaller one, as the various occasions present themselves. In the races which the Greeks and Romans were accustomed to run, the reward was a crown of laurels, "a corruptible crown," which only the foremost runner received. We, on our heavenward race, run under more favourable conditions. All who reach the goal are crowned with the crown of immortality. How it would help us to fight bravely, and to run without ceasing on the heavenly racecourse if we remembered that the reward not only surpasses all understanding, but that it is also eternal. The saints realised this truth, and thus they despised the so-called riches of earth. Jesus guards our treasures in heaven; they are in His keeping, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. There is only one thief who can rob us of our inheritance, and that one is our own self. We deprive ourselves of peace, happiness, and an eternal reward for some paltry gratification, and this, not once or twice in our life, but repeatedly. What need we have to ask to be defended against our own evil self.

We have enumerated some of our treasures, and have seen how precious they are; perhaps we long to possess them. Patience; the enjoyment of

these treasures will come in God's time, meanwhile He gives us a foretaste of heaven to strengthen us. Even here on earth we can enjoy peace in our inmost soul in the midst of storms of trial and temptations. God keeps in perfect peace those who trust in Him; therefore, provided we have a loving confidence in our heavenly Father we can enjoy by anticipation that peace which passes all human understanding. It is possible, with God's grace, to keep our souls pure, and thus to be intimately united to God, and to live in and for Him. We experience from time to time the consolation of spiritual sweetness. What earthly happiness can equal the joy of a first Communion or the happiness of a priest when he offers his first Mass? These are joys that are not of earth. As long as we tread this valley of tears we are nourished with the bread of angels: Jesus, our hidden God, comes to us to be our life and food, He veils His presence, but He is as truly present as He will be when we shall see Him with unclouded vision.

With these foretastes of eternal joys we must press on and strive to increase our treasures in heaven. Jesus bids us *lay them up*, and this we can do as long as we are on earth. How does a merchant increase his capital? By taking care of his business himself; he does not leave all to his inferiors, but while he gives each a certain task, he himself supervises everything carefully. He is on the watch for profitable investments, and is particularly careful about small gains. If he loses one day he tries to make up for it, so by constant vigilance and unwearied labour he succeeds in

amassing a fortune. In like manner in the spiritual life we must look after our own salvation and sanctification, for these are personal affairs. We must be on the alert and profit by the occasions of conquering self and practising virtue; what we lose to-day we must try to make up to-morrow. This programme seems so simple, but in practice, owing to our fallen nature and the devil's malice, it is extremely difficult. There are "sins and weights" to be laid aside, and this needs great courage. But we are not alone, our Lord is with us by His grace, and, provided we have a good will to save our souls, we shall infallibly succeed.

By way of encouraging yourself, Child of Mary, pay a visit in spirit to heaven. Contemplate the great white throng, the multitude who are now clothed in white, and have come out of great tribulation. Who is this radiant soul at the feet of Jesus? It is Mary Magdalen, the sinful woman to whom many sins were forgiven, because she loved much. Here is another ransomed one singing God's praises. His name was Dismas, better known as the *good thief*. What a contradiction these words seem! There, too, is St. Peter who denied Jesus thrice and the soldier who pierced our Lord's side. Many who mocked at our Lord and took an active part in His crucifixion are now among the saints in heaven. There are many in heaven whom you knew well when they lived on earth. They died a good death, and now stand before God's throne. Surely what they have done you can do. You are a Child of Mary, and have so many helps which are not given to all. Profit by them, use them faithfully, be true to your religious duties,

fulfil your daily task, and you will become a great saint. Our life is like a mosaic, it has to be fitted in stone by stone till the whole design is complete. Sorrows will fall to our lot, and we shall have often to go weeping on our way, but as an author beautifully expresses it: "Heaven and God are best discerned through tears, scarcely perhaps are they discerned at all without them." We can purchase heaven with the things of earth, if only we use them aright, for here below sorrows have a golden value. Salvation is so much easier than people are wont to imagine. A certain bishop was once asked "What is the simplest way to heaven?" He replied, "Turn at once to the right and go straight on." This is an excellent rule; apply it to each circumstance of your daily life. Do the right thing and keep at it steadily, thus you will make rapid progress heavenward. Invoke those saints who had the same difficulties that you experience. Do you find it hard to bend your will, to be humble? Ask St. Peter to help you to acquire this grace. Each saint made some special virtue his own, so it will be easy to find a heavenly protector who has met with the same obstacles that beset you.

We have thought together for a brief space of time over the home of our eternity, of the treasures that await us there, and how to reach that blest realm. Are you sitting by the wayside instead of marching forward? Get up and hurry on lest death surprise you there. Are you journeying slowly? Continue your efforts, try to be more generous, and, come what may, never lose courage, for "heaven is the prize," and that which is eternal

is worth striving after. Let go the things of earth if they hinder your onward progress. Give up the friendship of those who would draw you away from God. How far off is the goal? That is God's secret, but since about twenty-four thousand will reach the term of life to-day, you may be included in that number. Courage and confidence then, Child of Mary; continue your march heavenward, "looking on Jesus," and each day drawing nearer to Him, nearer to that blest realm:

> "Where loyal hearts and true
> Stand ever in the light,
> All rapture through and through
> In God's most holy sight."

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Opinions of the Press

Training of Girls in their Teens.

Madame Cecilia's literary skill and spiritual experience are excellently displayed in her little book "The Training of Girls in their Teens," a series of detailed counsels for the benefit of Christian Mothers and indirectly of their daughters. —*The Month.*

Home Truths.

These chapters of thoughtful advice for the Children of Mary may be read with advantage by all Christians. The volume is divided into two parts, the first, devoted to social and family life, to the duties of home and the perfection of conduct in the world; the second, to the inner life, the sanctification of time, the correction of faults, the choice of reading, the use of the Sacraments, prayer, devotion, and spiritual progress generally. . . . A treasury of judicious counsel and comfort, not alone for Children of Mary, but for all girls and women who wish to lead Christian lives in the world.—*The Tablet.*

Hints for Catechists on Instructing Converts.

The opening words of the Archbishop of Westminster in his preface to "Hints for Catechists" are well worth quoting. The Archbishop says: "There is no more consoling fact at the present day in England than the number of those in every rank of life who without any temporal attraction and often in actual danger of temporal loss, desire to be admitted within the one true Fold of Jesus Christ." In order to help those who have the labor of instructing such souls, Madame Cecilia has written this volume. It is intended not alone for priests and religious but also for such of the laity as undertake the work of catechetical instruction. Madame Cecilia writes with a knowledge and zeal born of extensive reading and

wide experience in the treatment of different classes of converts. She treats of the qualifications necessary for a catechist ; — of the method of teaching, and gives some brief notes on certain points of Christian doctrine. Madame Cecilia has done her work well and has given us a volume that will form a valuable addition to the books useful in the growing work of instructing non-Catholics.—*Catholic World.*

Labourers in God's Vineyard.

Madame Cecilia has laid us under still another obligation by her "Labourers in God's Vineyard." The object of the book is to persuade women to take their proper place in the work for souls : Feminism, which, as she remarks, has been developing so rapidly during the last few years, is turned into its proper channel. Every woman of whatever station of life has some special work to do, "as surely as you are a disciple of Christ, so surely is your life's work mapped out." One of the main objects of the book is to point out the great work the Catholic Women's League is doing, and of what practical utility it is. A great portion of the book is taken up with practical methods of labouring in God's Vineyard. Works for the home circle come next, and the amount that can be done in this way can only be realised by the perusal of the vast number of examples given by Madame Cecilia. In the remaining chapters the natural and supernatural qualifications necessary are most vividly pourtrayed ; while in the last we are told to remember, "that every supernatural action shall be recompensed by an eternal reward. When the heavens and earth shall have passed away, millions of years hence, the Christian who bestowed that cup of cold water will be enjoying his reward." The book is written in a charming and vivid style ; nearly every page furnishes some anecdote to bring home the moral still closer.—*The Tablet.*

More Spiritual Readings for Mary's Children.

A collection of articles which appeared originally in the pages of "The Child of Mary's Magazine" and which are here gathered together according to their subject matter into chapters with appropriate headings, e.g., Chapter II—Readings bearing on Zeal (there are eight of them). Readers of

the "Crucible" need no introduction to Madame Cecilia, and we need only add here that it is not necessary to belong to the official band of Mary's Children to appreciate and profit by this last issue of her wise and busy pen.—*The Crucible.*

At the Feet of Jesus.

In her last volume of spiritual conferences, Madame Cecilia, who is already in repute as the authoress of "The Convert's Guide," "Home Truths for Mary's Children," &c., publishes a course of spiritual readings or meditations which deserves a warm welcome. The writer's chief aim has been to enable the reader to realise how truly our Lord was made like unto men in all the bitter things—except sin—that fall to the lot of humanity. What she has here written should succeed in conveying, as well through the heart to the mind as through the mind to the heart, a fuller conception of how intensely human was the Son of Man. The theology of the book is of a healthy type, associated with sound common sense and deep spiritual insight. The literary style of the book is very good. —*Weekly Register.*

The Retreat Manual.

The general scope of this little book may perhaps be best indicated by the simple process of setting down the titles of its six chapters, viz. : (i) "Eve of the Retreat"; (ii) "Employment of time in Retreat"; (iii) "Self-Knowledge"; (iv) "On the Sacrament of Penance"; (v) "The Christian Life"; (vi) "Means of Perseverance." Although these titles do not in all cases fully tell their own tale, yet they sufficiently indicate that this manual differs widely from each and all of a score or more of books, familiar to many of us, which have been drawn up for the behoof of persons engaged in spiritual exercises of one kind or another. Here we have no "points of meditation," nor "conferences," or "considerations" in the usual form ; but rather a collection of hints and suggestions which presuppose the ordinary machinery of a retreat, and teach people—ladies especially—how to use it. Such a collection is all the more welcome because so very large a proportion of our "retreat" literature is primarily intended for "religious"; and although the truths of the Gospel are the same for all sorts and conditions of men, it is obviously desirable that

their special applications to particular states of life should be duly insisted on.—*The Tablet.*

Catholic Scripture Manuals.

These manuals are founded on lines already adopted by non-Catholic authors, whose works have been hitherto largely used in Catholic schools on account of their adaptability for enabling teachers and taught to attain more rapid and lasting results than were possible under the older methods. The first of the series is "The Gospel according to St. Mark." It may be said without hesitation that Madame Cecilia has succeeded in producing a work worthy of great praise, as well on account of its exhaustive character, as on account of the special features introduced, which render it superior to all others of its kind. As a manual for Catholic use, whether for the purpose of preparing students for the University Local Examinations, or for use by teachers in Catholic schools, it easily takes the first place. Among the special features above alluded to, may be noted that the text and annotations are placed in immediate juxtaposition ; side-lights, as they are termed, which give a full, clear and concise history of the Jews, their sects, worship, parties and rulers ; and additional notes intended for more advanced pupils. Where possible, the authoress has shown great care in explaining how the doctrines of the Catholic Church are based on the Holy Scriptures. Further, which is also a new departure, the Latin and English text of the Gospel are given in parallel columns. A special atlas is published, at a nominal price, in a separate volume, to serve for use in connection with the series.—*Catholic Book Notes.*

Cor Cordium.

All those who are familiar with Madame Cecilia's books of devotion will be glad to welcome this little collection of meditations on the Sacred Heart. They are presented in a shorter form than the meditations which she has already given us in "At the Feet of Jesus." And she herself prefers to call them "thoughts," "pensées." But the titles themselves will serve to show that they are of interest to all who can spare a few moments of the day to turn their thoughts upon such subjects as "Our True Friend," "Judge Not," "Self-Sacrifice," "Wealthy Rest," "The Test of Faithfulness."—*The Tablet.*

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